

Information, Education, Discussion

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

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

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BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism, No. 20, July 1985

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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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THE SWP CONVENTION MUST ACT TO HEAL THE SPLIT

by the F.I.T. National Coordinators

The May plenum of the SWP National Committee has issued a call for the next party convention to take place in August. This will be the third such gathering since the unprecedented mass purge of oppositionists from the SWP was completed in January 1984. It is urgent that the delegates to this convention begin the process of healing the split imposed on the SWP by the factional actions of the Barnes leadership.

At the 1985 World Congress, the Fourth International demanded that those who had been expelled from the party--who had reorganized themselves in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action -- be readmitted. It is four months since the congress, but the elected leadership of the SWP, the Political Committee and National Committee, has refused to take any action to comply with this demand. Instead these bodies have continued their course of excluding the expelled members from any contact with the SWP, refusing to respond to correspondence from us, and generally treating us, unjustifiably, as opponent organizations.

There are indications that the leadership of the party is presently concerned about improving relations, which have deteriorated significantly in the last few years, with sections of the Fourth International in other countries and with the International itself. This is all to the good. But a major obstacle to improved relations between the SWP and others in the FI continues to be the organizational expulsion and exclusion of those whose sole "crime" was to seek to defend their political views through a democratic debate and discussion within the SWP. This must be corrected for the good of the SWP and the FI.

We were arbitrarily expelled because the central leaders of the SWP have been unwilling to face an open debate and discussion within the party on their theoretical and programmatic revisions--changes on such fundamental questions as permanent revolution, political revolution, and the application of the transitional program and the united-front defense of the interests of

workers and their allies. A leadership which resorts to such organizational methods for dealing with political differences reveals a lack of confidence in its own ideas and program, and in the capacity of the membership to exercise its democratic right to decide such issues after hearing all sides.

The SWP has already had two pre-convention discussions from which we were excluded and it is presently involved in a third. The kind of one-sided discussion which occurred before the last two conventions (and which promises to be repeated for this one), spiced with slanders of the expelled opposition presented in the guise of "information" while prohibiting members from any contact with us or from hearing our views, can never resolve the differences on important issues which have been raised as a result of the retreat from Marxism by the Barnes leadership.

The bureaucratic norms imposed on the party provided an organizational device for the political purge of critics and potential critics of the majority faction. These norms were thoroughly repudiated by the World Congress delegates in acting on our appeals, and must be reversed if the SWP is to regain authority and influence in our world movement.

The August 1985 SWP convention must act! The convention can and should carry out the decision of the World Congress on the appeals of the expelled members for reintegration in the party. It must reverse the bureaucratic "norms" of the Barnes faction; it must open the discussion in the party and return to democratic centralist practices essential for building revolutionary mass parties of the Fourth International; it must let the party membership decide the issues in dispute after a full and democratic debate!

If readmitted to the party, we, for our part, will pledge to abide by the decisions of the majority, even though we may disagree with them. We will build the SWP as we have always done -- in a loyal and disciplined manner.

June 8, 1985

WHAT WILL THE NEXT SWP CONVENTION REVEAL?

by Steve Bloom

A meeting of the SWP National Committee held early in May adopted the call for a national convention of the party to take place from August 10 to 15. This will be the third convention of the SWP in less than 13 months, all of them occurring since the mass purge of oppositionists by the Barnes leadership. Those of us who disagree with the programmatic and theoretical changes imposed by that leadership after the end of the 1981 party convention have been barred from participating in the discussion process in the party--though a discussion which includes all points of view is an absolute necessity if the issues in dispute are to be resolved in a democratic fashion.

On May 4 the latest convention call was sent out to branches in a letter signed by Jack Barnes. It is also published in SWP Information Bulletin, No. 1 in 1985. In the same bulletin, a letter by Larry Seigle appears, "Organizing for the Party Convention." Judging from the text of the call, the National Committee didn't take very much time to consider what kind of convention the SWP needs right now.

The most pressing issue by far that the party faces is: What to do about the decision made by the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International concerning the appeal of the expelled members? The delegates to that congress demanded that the SWP reverse the political purge carried out by its leadership and reintegrate into the party those who were members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action. Yet there is not even a place on the agenda of the August convention to discuss this problem.

The agenda established in the call is:

1. State of the Farm Movement in the United States and Party Tasks
2. The Fight for Black Liberation Today
3. The State of the Unions and the Party's Industrial Union Fractions
4. Political Resolution:
"Revolutionary Perspective and Leninist Continuity in the United States"
5. Organization Reports
6. Election of National Committee

Thinking party members, on reading this agenda, may well ask whether it is really more important to discuss the party's approach to the farm movement in the U.S., or reconsider a political resolution that has already been discussed and voted on twice before--and published in the New International--than it is to decide on the SWP's relationship to the world party of socialist revolution, the Fourth International. Nothing less than this is at stake in the proposal to ignore the decisions of the World Congress at the August meeting of the SWP's highest body.

A refusal to act favorably on the case of the expelled members at the convention will come on top of the inaction up to now of the party's Political Committee and National Committee. The NC has held two meetings since the World Congress but has done nothing to comply with the congress's demand--for the restoration of Fourth Internationalist unity in the United States through readmission of the expellees into the SWP.

* * *

Party members will know what to expect under points 1 and 3 of the proposed agenda, because Information Bulletin No. 1 in 1985 prints reports on them--by John Gaige and Joel Britton, respectively. These were approved by the NC in May. They also know what point 4 is about, because although Seigle refers to a "new political resolution" in his letter, it is in fact the same document that has been voted on twice before.

What the report on Black liberation will cover is not yet clear. No document on this will be submitted to the convention or pre-convention discussion. Instead, there will be a "report to the convention, which will be worked up by the Political Committee." After the convention, the NC "will discuss the report further, and take the next step in the preparation of a document on this subject."

But at least there will be some attention paid to the Black movement, even though there will be nothing available in written form to discuss and vote on when convention delegates are chosen. That's more attention than the equally neglected women's movement will receive at this convention. The NC's decision on

this at its May meeting was that the next NC -- the one to be elected in August -- "begin work next fall on preparing reports and/or resolutions on an additional key aspect of the Political Resolution: the fight for women's liberation today."

* * *

One point which will be of interest is the nature of the preconvention discussion which takes place this time. The purge of oppositionists before the convention last August eliminated most of those in the party who would have spoken out against the leadership's new line. This was reflected in the SWP Discussion Bulletin for the August 1984 convention, which contained far fewer articles than before previous conventions -- even during times when there were less crucial political issues in dispute. Still there were a number of articles last summer which challenged aspects of the present party leadership's policies and proposals.

Then, during the very course of the convention itself, Eileen Gersh from Philadelphia, who had been the author of an opposition platform calling for the maintenance of the programmatic traditions of the SWP, was expelled. This, no doubt, sent a message to others in the party. The result could only be an intensification of the general atmosphere of intimidation against anyone who raised a voice in protest. Combined with the overall crisis in the party--loss of membership, continued disorientation regarding the U.S. class struggle, etc.--this resulted in a discussion before the SWP's pre-World Congress convention last January which turned out to be the smallest in the history of the party.

It has always been axiomatic in the SWP, until recent years, that an informed, active, self-confident membership, one that is able and willing to participate in discussions about the broad array of issues and problems facing the revolutionary movement, is the surest sign of a healthy Leninist organization. If that is true, then the SWP today is suffering from a deep malaise. We will be able to assess this more clearly after we see what happens during the current preconvention period.

It is of some significance that the Young Socialist Alliance is suffering from an even more advanced stage of this disease. During the period before the last YSA convention, which took place on May 25-27 in Chicago, only two YSA Discussion Bulletins appeared--and of these only one contained any discussion articles. The other was taken up by the

draft political resolution entitled, "The fight against imperialist war and building the YSA today," presented by the National Executive Committee.

* * *

The latest SWP convention call introduces one conscious and premeditated change in the organization of the SWP's preconvention discussion which should be taken note of. Up to the 1981 convention the established custom in the party was for the Discussion Bulletin published before a convention to contain any and every article written for it and submitted by members of the party.

This tradition was followed because it guaranteed that the membership had a chance, at least once every two years, to communicate ideas to others and raise criticisms in an unrestricted way. This method of holding the preconvention discussion made for some lengthy reading at times, but that was always considered part of the unavoidable overhead of a democratic party--an overhead far outweighed by the benefits which were achieved from encouraging the free exchange of ideas.

Then, before the 1984 convention, something new was introduced. Contributions to be printed in the bulletin would be limited to four per member, and must be relevant to the points on the agenda listed in the convention call or "others they may wish to propose." But these were not particularly significant restrictions. Very few comrades ever contributed more than four articles, and since no limit on the length of individual articles was imposed this meant very little in practice. The same was true for the relevancy requirement--since there are very few questions that are not relevant in some way at some point on a convention agenda.

Nevertheless, the idea of restricting the discussion was introduced through these measures. Now in the latest call we have something new, and entirely different. It states, "In editing the Discussion Bulletin the Political Committee shall be guided by the party's norm guaranteeing that all points of view within the party bearing on the decisions before the party convention are adequately presented to the membership." No longer, apparently, does a member with a particular point of view have the right to decide how her or his own views should be "adequately presented" to the party. That right now belongs to the Political Committee.

Such a provision for the preconvention discussion sets a very dangerous precedent. It can clearly become the basis for abuse by the leadership. Even

if it is not applied in the present discussion, a strong danger exists for the future. The last formal right remaining to SWP members--the right to express their own views, in their own way and without restriction, during the pre-convention discussion--is being undermined.

Of course, there is no law which states that the old tradition of the party--that everything submitted to the bulletin should be printed--is the only way to function and must hold true for all time. One can imagine a situation where the membership of the revolutionary organization grows to the point where this is no longer practical. But

the present party leaders are introducing new restrictions at a time when the party membership is shrinking, not expanding, and at a time which calls for measures to stimulate participation in the discussion by the rank and file, not for inhibiting it further.

The drying up of discussion in the SWP is one of the clear signs of the present crisis in the party. The fact that, given this reality, the Barnes leadership takes a step which could allow it to further reduce open debate is a clear sign of its own degeneration as a leadership, and of its retreat from the construction of a genuine revolutionary Marxist vanguard in the USA. □

LEON TROTSKY and the ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES of the REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

By Dianne Feeley, Paul Le Blanc, and Tom Twiss

This is the first comprehensive examination of Trotsky's views on revolutionary organizational principles and norms from 1917 to 1940. It consists primarily of quotations and is organized into three sections: 1) a summary of his basic conception of organizational principles; 2) an account of his defense of Bolshevik norms during the struggle of the Left Opposition from 1923 to 1929; and 3) a survey of his views during his exile, 1929 to 1940, when he led the International Left Opposition and the Fourth International.

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THE SECOND EMERGENCY NATIONAL CONFERENCE

For a United Anti-Intervention Movement

by Evelyn Sell

The full name of the conference explains our central, major focus: the Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean.

Since our answer to "What next?" is consistent with our approach from the beginning, I'm going to read you parts of the action proposal adopted at our first conference held in Cleveland last September, and then I'll read from our statement to the March 30 meeting of the National Steering Committee of the April Actions for Peace, Jobs and Justice.

First from the action proposal adopted last September:

"In the face of what is clearly an emergency situation, the need for the U.S. anti-intervention movement to close ranks and unite now is absolutely critical. Given the overwhelming majority sentiment of the U.S. population against the government's interventionist policies, the significant growth of this sentiment in the labor movement, and international opposition, the intervention can be stopped and new escalations prevented. But it will take united massive actions joining together anti-interventionist trade unionists, peace groups, solidarity networks, the religious community, the women's rights movement, minorities, seniors, students and all others who oppose the government's interventionist policies. The more the relationship is understood between the U.S. government's war policies in Central America/the Caribbean and economic and social conditions within the United States, the more possible it becomes to build a truly broad and united anti-intervention movement. Union busting, mass unemployment, runaway budget deficits, cuts in social programs, deteriorating conditions for Blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities, as-

saults on women's rights, erosion of civil rights and civil liberties--all are part and parcel of the same policies that promote U.S. interventionism.

"The key to achieving unity lies in organizing the anti-intervention movement on a non-partisan and non-exclusionary basis. The aim must be to unite all opponents of interventionism regardless of political philosophy or affiliation....

"It is through organizing mass demonstrations in the streets that the entire anti-intervention movement comes together. Such demonstrations have the greatest impact on the thinking and consciousness of the American people....

"The U.S. anti-intervention and anti-nuclear movements are natural allies. ... Unity in action by the anti-intervention and anti-nuclear movements --so vitally needed today--can pave the way for demonstrations in the months ahead of a size and magnitude without precedent."

Of the action proposals adopted at the first Emergency National Conference one was for demonstrations on April 20, 1985. The Continuations Committee of the Emergency National Conference participated, at national and local levels, in organizing and building the very successful marches and rallies which took place last week.

As the April 20 date drew nearer and nearer, and as enthusiasm and support for April 20 grew all around the country, people began to talk about continuing the coalitions which had been formed. At the March 30 meeting of the National Steering Committee of the April Actions for Peace, Jobs and Justice, the representative from the Emergency National Conference Continuations Committee, Jim Lafferty, made a statement explaining the goals of the second conference:

"This Second Emergency National Conference has been called in recognition of the clear and urgent necessity for continued actions after April 22nd. Reagan's open threats to overthrow the government of Nicaragua and the brutal bombing in El Salvador; his continued

This article is based on a talk at a forum in Los Angeles on April 26, 1985. The call for the Second Emergency National Conference (Minneapolis, June 21-23, 1985, was reprinted in Bulletin IDOM, No. 19, 1985.

SWP IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA ATTACKED BY RIGHT-WING THUGS

An example of how attacks from right-wing extremists can and should be countered is provided by the defense recently mounted against a series of assaults on the Socialist Workers Party in California.

The attacks began in San Jose on April 27 when the SWP organized an educational conference on the lessons of Vietnam. That was when the right-wing thugs showed up in force. They were unable to disrupt the conference, but they returned the next day. About 200 of them armed with stones and clubs trapped 17 members of the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance in the party headquarters. The socialists were evacuated under police protection. For the next three weeks the right-wingers carried on a campaign of intimidation, demanding that socialists "get out of San Jose." During the night of May 16-17 all the windows of the SWP's San Jose headquarters were smashed.

This was the prelude to a five-day speaking tour in the Bay Area by Diane Wang. A national representative of the SWP, Wang visited Vietnam and Kampuchea in 1984 and wrote about her travels. Her first meeting was in San Jose on May 18 at the cleaned-up bookstore and headquarters of the SWP. She gave two classes in the afternoon. A rally in the evening celebrated the 1975 victory of the revolution in Vietnam.

About 100 right-wing thugs were on hand throughout the day and evening. They hurled epithets and stones and brandished clubs. They burned the Vietnamese flag and pictures of Marx, Lenin, and Ho Chi Minh. At one point some of them rushed towards the meeting's monitors who were stationed outside the building. They knocked down a Black camerawoman from TV channel 8 DSVW, but failed to destroy the film which was shown on the evening news broadcast.

On May 21 Diane Wang spoke in San Francisco at the SWP headquarters and bookstore in the largely working class Mission District. For a weekday meeting it was well attended. It was also well protected. The SWP had called on unions and radical organizations for help to

monitor the meeting and guard against right-wing attacks. The police were also notified.

Right-wingers had distributed leaflets in San Jose calling on the Vietnamese community to help "drive out the Communists" and promising to disrupt SWP meetings in San Francisco and Oakland. Those who showed up in the Bay area were the same thugs who had been seen in San Jose -- but they were less successful in San Francisco and Oakland. The Militant (June 7) reported that in San Francisco "several of the thugs tried to charge the bookstore but were unable to break through the large barricade of police." It said, "The meeting ended successfully."

On the afternoon of May 22 Diane Wang spoke at Merritt College in Oakland without incident. About 30 thugs tried to attend her meeting but were turned away by campus security. The dean of the college also showed up, taking direct responsibility for the safety of Wang and those attending her talk.

That evening Wang spoke at the SWP bookstore in Oakland. Although notified, the Oakland police arrived late and were uncooperative. When the right-wing thugs threw eggs at those attending the meeting the cops "saw nothing."

The Diane Wang speaking tour succeeded in spite of the attempts to disrupt it. Wang appeared on TV, spoke on radio, helped sell socialist literature, and raised several thousand dollars to publish more literature. In addition, her tour marks the start of a broadly based civil liberties defense campaign that can expose and help set back any present schemes of right-wingers to launch a witch-hunt against radicals and the emerging antiwar movement.

The SWP has a valuable historical heritage and a vast store of useful experience from the 1950s in defense of civil liberties. This is what accounts for the initial success of the Diane Wang tour and the prospect of further defense actions that it initiated. The first thing the SWP did when its San Jose headquarters was vandalized in April was to call for help from everyone who was outraged by the attacks of the

right-wing thugs or felt threatened by the apparent compliance of the local police.

On May 8 a community meeting was called at the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 265 hall in San Jose. In attendance were representatives from the Santa Clara County Council of Churches, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), the Asian Law Alliance, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Free South Africa Movement, the National Lawyers Guild, the Labor Committee on El Salvador and Central America, the All-African Peoples Revolutionary Party, the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and others as well as the most recent victims of vicious physical assault and right-wing intimidation, the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance.

At that meeting an exchange of information and experience revealed that almost everyone present had been threatened or victimized or knew someone who had suffered the indignities of right-wing assaults in their community. James McEntee, director of the Human Relations Commission for the city of San Jose, reported that the San Jose Mercury News, which ran a series of articles on Vietnam, was overwhelmed by phone calls from a small group of organized right-wingers attacking the articles. He said the Vietnamese community was not responsible for or supportive of the campaign.

The SWP publicized the fact that San Jose police seemed to be implicated with the right-wingers. Police chief Joseph McNamara had pretended to know nothing about the window smashing spree at the SWP headquarters and seemed uninterested in investigating the incident. He told an SWP representative that it's not illegal for the right-wingers to chant "Kill Communists." He said, "They have a right to express their opinion."

Those present at the May 8 community meeting decided to call a mass rally in defense of civil liberties in June, the exact time, place, and list of speakers to be decided at a future planning meeting.

During the five days of the Diane Wang tour in the Bay Area the SWP sought help from unions and radical organizations to monitor the meetings, not relying on police protection. At the San Francisco meeting the ranks of monitors defending it were swelled by on-the-spot volunteers from the neighborhood who joined in chanting, "Si Vietnam vencio, El Salvador vencera. No Pasaran!"

It was reported that other chants

developed spontaneously from the street-wise volunteers: "Reagan's puppets will not pass." And pointing to the Vietnamese thugs, they chanted, "CIA, CIA, CIA."

Those who, on short notice, joined the organized defense as monitors included individuals from Casa El Salvador Farabundo Marti, Casa Cultura Nicaraguense, Case Chile, CISPES, North Star Network, and Vietnam Friendship Society. Members of some unions also served as monitors.

As the Diane Wang tour progressed around the Bay Area many thousands beyond those who attended her meetings saw that the city police were present to organize and protect the right-wing rowdies. This impressed those who heard Wang on radio and saw her on TV. The police were at her meetings to protect the demonstrators, not the meetings.

As a result of right-wing vituperation and the perceived complicity of political authority at the local and probably national levels, plans for a civil liberties defense rally were spurred on. At the conclusion of Wang's speaking tour on May 22 these plans "for a broad speakout and assembly in San Jose" had been endorsed by a wide range of organized political expression. Endorsers included elected public officials in Oakland and in Alameda County, representatives of the clergy in the Bay Area, faculty members at the University of Santa Clara, union officials, student activists in the anti-apartheid demonstrations at the University of California at Berkeley, leaders in the Black community and in the Mandela Coalition at San Jose State University, outstanding civil libertarians, and leaders in the feminist movement.

The three main currents in the working class political movement were officially represented among the endorsers. They are the East Bay Democratic Socialists of America; the Santa Clara County Communist Party; and the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance. This comprehensive united front in defense of the basic right to speak and be heard promises well for coming struggles. The date of the San Jose speakout was set for June 28, 7 p.m., at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 405 South 10th Street.

We urge our readers to denounce the right-wing attacks on the SWP in the San Francisco Bay area. Write: Mayor Thomas McEnery, 801 N. 1st St., San Jose, CA 95110; and Police Chief Joseph McNamara, 201 W. Mission St., San Jose, CA 95110.

June 10, 1985

F.I.T. NATIONAL CONFERENCE AFFIRMS ORIENTATION TO SWP

by Stuart Brown

The Second National Conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency met in New York on May 25-27. The delegates from F.I.T. Local Organizing Committees across the country voted overwhelmingly to reaffirm the original platform of the tendency, which spells out our political perspectives as the reform of the Socialist Workers Party--winning the membership of the party back to the revolutionary Marxist program which is being steadily abandoned by the Barnes leadership--and the reunification of the Fourth Internationalist movement in the United States within the SWP.

The conference had a four-point agenda:

- 1) World Movement Report
- 2) Tasks and Perspectives
- 3) Political Resolution
- 4) Election of NOC.

The NOC, or National Organizing Committee, is the highest decision-making body of the F.I.T. between national conferences.

The report on developments in the Fourth International since the World Congress in February 1985 was given by Steve Bloom, one of the three national coordinators of the F.I.T. This report stressed the necessity of continuing to push for a sustained programmatic and theoretical struggle, involving our entire world movement, against the revisionist and liquidationist faction organized in the FI by the Barnes current.

The report discussed the progress made as a result of the decisions of the World Congress itself, as well as the tasks which still remain to be accomplished. In particular, it noted the motions passed by the congress delegates demanding the readmittance to the party of expelled SWP members, along with the defense of the programmatic traditions of the Fourth International. The congress upheld a Trotskyist program while avoiding the sectarian trap of simply repeating old formulas from memory without applying them to new events. In this way it laid the basis for moving forward on a world scale. (For a complete report on what happened at the World Congress, see Bulletin IDOM, No. 17.)

The reporter also noted more recent

developments, such as the shift which has apparently been made by the Barnes leadership of the SWP toward a friendlier attitude with regard to others in the FI. It was noted that up to this point this shift has been reflected in superficial matters--the tone of articles in Intercontinental Press dealing with sections in other countries, reestablishing correct formal relations with the United Secretariat, etc. But there has been no change in the political trajectory which Barnes laid out in his anti-Trotskyist speech, "Their Trotsky and Ours" (see New International, Fall 1983) or in the attitude of the party leadership toward the expelled members--which are the keys to improving relations between the SWP and others in the FI.

The Tasks and Perspectives resolution which was adopted by the delegates, and the report on it given by Bill Onasch, another of the F.I.T. national coordinators, concluded that there was no basis to change the fundamental orientation of the F.I.T., as spelled out in our founding platform and in the Tasks and Perspectives resolution adopted by our first conference last October. The F.I.T. is an expelled tendency, which should, and would, still be part of the SWP were it not for the bureaucratic purge carried out by the Barnes faction.

If we were still members of the SWP, we would be fighting to win the party membership away from the ideas of the revisionist tendency in the leadership. Our fundamental task remains the same even though we have been expelled, although the forms through which it is possible to carry it out are altered dramatically.

At the same time, because of our expulsion, it is essential for the F.I.T. to undertake certain tasks that go beyond those of a tendency within the party. We have set up our own, functioning, national organization with its own public press. We have been heavily involved in mass activity--in particular in the movement against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean--and we try to organize that activity in a disciplined, Leninist fashion.

A small minority at the conference --about 12 percent of the delegate votes --supported a counterresolution which called for a qualitative turn in the

GREETINGS FROM JAMES KUTCHER

I have to repeat what I said to your first conference--that I regret my inability to attend because of medical reasons. I still have not attended my first F.I.T. meeting of any kind, but I have been able to read your bulletins, pamphlets, and information letters and in that way to keep up with your problems and activities. I am still too removed from things to be able to comment on the specific resolutions that your conference will be discussing, but from what I have read I know I am in complete solidarity with your objectives.

Have you made progress since your first conference in awakening the members of the SWP to the dangerous course that the leadership is taking? You can tell that better than I can. But one thing I am sure of is that our position was greatly strengthened and reinforced by the recent congress of the Fourth International and its demand that we should be reinstated in the SWP with all the rights and responsibilities of other members. Whatever the leadership may or may not tell the SWP membership about the congress decision on the appeal of the expelled members, we can be sure that the impact of this action by our world movement will sooner or later be felt by the membership.

I know that that does not automatically mean our reinstatement, but it is a moral defeat for those who expelled us unjustly and a moral victory for those who opposed the expulsions or want to rescind them. It should encourage us all to continue and improve our efforts, especially between now and the SWP convention in August. The fight is difficult, but it is not finished, and nobody at this point can predict the outcome with certainty, not even the SWP leadership, which has been forced to shift its ground a number of times in the last year.

In most of the places where I have written "you" I should have written "we." As long as we are guided by the program of the Fourth International and the traditions transmitted to us by Trotsky and Cannon, I am sure that we will find the right road, despite obstacles and adversities that temporarily deter us.

work of the F.I.T. It proposed that instead of focusing on the reform of the SWP as our main task, which had been correct before, the present situation required that we place our primary attention on efforts to unify with Socialist Action, another group of expelled SWP members.

The Political Resolution and report were presented by the third F.I.T. coordinator, Evelyn Sell. She focused on the new developments in the U.S. political scene--April 20, the wave of campus protests around apartheid, the stirrings within the unions under attack--and how these developments conflict with the schematic notions presented by the SWP in its political resolution which was adopted at the party convention last August and reaffirmed at the pre-World Congress convention in January. Sell stressed in particular the question of method--the difference between the Marxist approach of dialectical materialism, and the empiricism practiced by the leaders of the SWP.

As a supplement to this political report, the conference also heard reports on the current stage of the anti-intervention struggle--including the work being done to build the Second Emergency National Conference scheduled to take place June 21-23 in Minneapolis --and on activities in Philadelphia to protest the police fire-bombing of the MOVE organization.

In attendance at the conference were F.I.T. members and guests who represented an average of 20 years experience in the Socialist Workers Party. International guests came from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Alliance for Socialist Action in Canada. One of the guests present, who was not yet a member of the F.I.T., decided to join as a result of listening to and participating in the discussions which took place.

A highlight of the weekend was the memorial meeting for George Lavan Weissman held on Saturday evening, May 25. In addition to the conference sessions for reports and discussions by the delegates, workshops were held on Sunday evening to take up trade union work and recruitment. A meeting of the new National Organizing Committee after the conference reelected the three national coordinators of the F.I.T.--Evelyn Sell, Bill Onasch, and Steve Bloom.

The next issue of the Bulletin IDOM will publish material from the F.I.T. national conference. □

GEORGE LAVAN WEISSMAN HONORED AT N.Y. MEETING

by Naomi Allen

More than 130 people crammed into the Brecht Auditorium at the New York Marxist School on Saturday night, May 25, to bid a final goodbye to veteran SWP leader and activist George Lavan Weissman. The Socialist Workers Party, to which Weissman devoted his entire adult political life, was conspicuous by its failure to send either a message or a representative.

The assembled friends, comrades, and family members heard an array of speakers talk about Weissman's life and accomplishments, from his youthful support to the fight against Franco in the Spanish Civil War to his dramatic appeal for reinstatement in the SWP after his 1984 expulsion. Friends and comrades from all over the world sent messages to the meeting.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency, which sponsored the meeting, invited speakers or messages from the SWP, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, and Socialist Action. The United Secretariat and SA each sent a message and a speaker to deliver it. The SWP sent neither, and even refused to reply to the invitation. Messages also arrived from the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, Mexican section of the Fourth International, and the Socialist Workers Collective of Toronto, an affiliate of the Canadian Alliance for Socialist Action, which has fraternal relations with the Fourth International.

The organizers of the meeting announced the launching of a \$10,000 George Lavan Weissman Memorial Publications Fund to continue and expand the circulation of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism and to publish books and pamphlets pertinent to Weissman's political activities. The fund letter is on p. 13 of this issue.

Those who addressed the meeting had known George at different times of his life, had worked with him in various political campaigns or defense committees or party departments, and their comments reflected the diversity of George's accomplishments and the breadth of his interests and knowledge. But they

also all sounded a common theme--appreciation of the human qualities that made George stand out among his peers--the exceptional warmth, kindness, generosity, and sensitivity to other people's needs that earned him the love of everyone who came into contact with him and the respect of even those whose political views diverged sharply from his own.

These personal qualities were more than incidental to George's character. They were a consequence of his vision of a world without oppression and exploitation. At the meeting, Marxist historian and critic Annette Rubinstein paraphrased Henry David Thoreau on the subject of those who claim to want to make a new society. "Thoreau said, 'When a traveling salesman tries to sell you something, you expect he will carry a sample with him. When these people try to sell me the future world that I should work for and believe in, I say, Where is your sample of humanity that will exist then?'" Rubinstein added, "George was his own sample, and a very good one."

The message from the United Secretariat noted Weissman's link with the early days of our movement: "The Fourth International will remember George Weissman as an outstanding representative of the founding generation of the world Trotskyist movement. His life is an illustration of how much can be done by devoted and conscious revolutionists acting in accordance with their understanding and their convictions, even when they are only a tiny handful in a world dominated by reaction and unreason. Very few in Weissman's time could have lived a more useful or fulfilled life, one more totally dedicated to defending and advancing human dignity."

George Breitman, a representative of the F.I.T. and a friend of Weissman for 40 years, described the circumstances that led George, during his student days, to dedicate himself to the revolutionary socialist movement. He also reported the facts about Weissman's expulsion from the SWP for "disloyalty"

in 1984, as recounted in a letter that is printed in "George Lavan Weissman's Last Three Articles," an F.I.T. pamphlet available at the memorial meeting.

Breitman strongly criticized the Militant's obituary article about Weissman, its former editor, because it falsely said that he had "left" the SWP as part of "a split" over organizational and political differences. Weissman did not leave--he was thrown out, and his expulsion was part of a political purge by the SWP leadership, not a "split." He also said:

"The Militant's lie is all the more repugnant because it is so blatant, so easy to check and disprove. That is what the recent World Congress of the Fourth International did in the month before George's death, when it received the appeals for reinstatement in the SWP by George and other members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action. The delegates to that congress, from affiliates of the International around the world, checked the facts and by an overwhelming majority rejected the so-called 'split' version presented by the SWP leadership, ruled that George and the other expellees had been unjustly purged, and demanded that the SWP reinstate us. The Militant has never told its readers what the Fourth International did in this case--instead it repeats in its obituary article the very same lie that the public opinion of the whole Fourth International has demonstratively rejected."

A campaign that George was closely identified with was the case of the legless veteran. James Kutcher, an SWP member who lost both legs in Italy during World War II, fell victim to the McCarthyite witch-hunt during the forties when the U.S. government fired him from his Veterans Administration post and tried to deprive him of his military pension, his apartment, his medical coverage, and even his artificial legs. George worked on Jim Kutcher's defense committee for years, until Kutcher won full vindication and full reinstatement to his job with all back pay. And he stuck by Jim even after Jim was brutally slandered by the leadership of the SWP and expelled in 1983. Kutcher could not attend the memorial meeting because he has been hospitalized for a year and a half with serious medical problems, but he sent a message that was read to the meeting.

George's involvement with the Trotsky family went back several decades and took many forms. It was both personal and political. He was the literary representative in the United States of

Trotsky's estate, was Pathfinder Press's chief link to the Trotsky archives at Harvard at a time when the SWP was still interested in publishing Trotsky's works, and participated in the centenary of Trotsky's birth in Mexico City in 1979. George and his first wife, Constance Fox Harding, entertained Natalia Sedova, Trotsky's widow, in their home during her visit to New York in the fifties, and he maintained a close relationship to Trotsky's grandson, Seva Volkov, and to his family as well. Volkov traveled to New York for the memorial meeting from Mexico and delivered a speech to the meeting that was translated by his daughter Nora. Volkov referred to Weissman's lifelong efforts to defend the basic principles of Trotskyism, and called him "the personification of the new man of the socialist society of the future, in a world without borders and without oppression, without exploitation and violence among people. Men like George Weissman make us proud of our human condition and of the Trotskyist movement--a living example of the high goals of humanity."

A notable contribution to the meeting came from two of Weissman's granddaughters, Cindy and Libby Harding, members of a singing group called Sabia, named after the national bird of Brazil. They performed a musical tribute to George, accompanying themselves on flute and guitar. Their father, Timothy Harding, George's stepson from his first marriage and now a professor of Latin American studies in Los Angeles, told the meeting about George's influences upon him as a boy and a young man.

Augusta Trainor recalled the half century she and her late husband Larry had known George, and their work in the Socialist Party in the thirties. Paul Siegel spoke of George's activity in their college days together, when they founded a branch of the SWP at Harvard. George Saunders, who worked with Weissman on the Militant and at Merit Publishers and Pathfinder Press, offered an appreciation of Weissman as an editor--his tact and his respect for the writers he worked with.

Weissman's tact and his ability to work on an equal footing with people of all social backgrounds and all generations were also cited by Mary Scully, a friend of George and his second wife, Muriel McAvoy. She told of the encouragement Weissman gave her when she was going through trade school and working in her first industrial job, and his continuing aid and collaboration even during his final illness.



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

May 24, 1985

Dear Friend,

During his entire life George Lavan Weissman devoted himself to the fight for a socialist world. He continued this fight in his last year, despite the setback caused by the purge of Trotskyists from the SWP. He became a founding member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, and, until his death, served on the editorial board of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.

As a tribute to George, the F.I.T. has decided to launch a "George Lavan Weissman Memorial Publications Fund," with the ambitious goal of raising \$10,000 from our members and friends.

We believe this is a particularly fitting way to remember George because of the important role he played in different publishing projects of the Trotskyist movement. The money we raise will be used to continue, and expand the circulation of, the monthly journal of the F.I.T., the Bulletin IDOM, the last of our movement's publications George contributed to. It will also enable us to publish books and pamphlets on a variety of subjects, such as James P. Cannon's views on democratic centralism. Research has already begun on a possible volume of George Lavan Weissman's articles from the Militant.

If you would like to make a donation to this fund please use the coupon at the bottom of this page.

Revolutionary Greetings,

George Breitman

George Breitman
Treasurer, Weissman
Memorial Fund

GEORGE LAVAN WEISSMAN MEMORIAL PUBLICATIONS FUND

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____

Please make checks payable to George Breitman

Individual messages were received from Ernest Mandel, Marxist economist and leader of the Fourth International, Brussels; Arminda Chavez de Yanez and a group of friends and comrades in Mexico; Pierre Broue, editorial director of the Leon Trotsky Institute in France; Mildred Gordon, a leading activist in the British Labor Party in London, who gratefully recalled George's work on behalf of European displaced persons after World War II; Louis Sinclair, the bibliographer of Trotsky, Scotland; Michel Pablo, former leader of Greek Trotskyism and of the FI, Athens; Tamara Deutscher, translator and writer, London; John Archer, historian of British Trotskyism, London; Gerry Foley, journalist and translator; Marguerite Bonnet, Trotsky's literary representative in France; David King, editor, London.

From Canada individual messages were sent by: Ruth Bullock, Vancouver; Bob Fink, editor of Crosscurrents, Saskatchewan; Ross Dowson, a leader of Canadian Trotskyism until the 1970s, Toronto.

Messages also came from Dave Dellinger, antiwar activist and former editor of Liberation magazine; Albert Glotzer, a member of Social Democrats USA who left the SWP in 1940 with Max Shachtman; Melissa Singler, former YSA and SWP leader who was business manager of Pathfinder and Merit while George was editor there; Cliff Conner, who gave his own greetings while transmitting those of Socialist Action; Les Evans, former editor of International Socialist Review; Alan Wald, Marxist scholar at the University of Michigan whom George assisted with research into the literary history of the American left; Myra Tanner Weiss, former SWP vice-presidential candidate; Ruth Schein, former editorial associate of Weissman at the Militant and Pathfinder; Rita Shaw, F.I.T., antiwar and women's movement activist; Vera Stewart, Newark; David M. Freedman, attorney, New York; James Robertson, Spartacist League; Herb and Pauline Lewin, Internationalist Workers Party.

Many messages could not be read for lack of time. Excerpts from a number of them will be printed in a future issue of the Bulletin IDOM. □

Excerpt from the message of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, the Mexican section of the Fourth International, to the George Weissman Memorial Meeting: "Weissman was a founding member of the SWP ... and of the FI itself in 1938. Since then, he took part in the workers' movement as an organizer in various cities; in the party as a branch organizer for the SWP in Boston and Youngstown, Ohio; as director of Pathfinder Press, as director of the Militant, the SWP's paper; and as East Coast organizer for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, an organization in the US that defended the Cuban revolution against the attacks and aggressions of the White House in the early 60s....

"In 1984 he was expelled from the SWP for his political positions and he helped to found the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Until the day of his death he held aloft the banners of revolutionary Marxism and of the Fourth International against all their detractors, including the leadership of his own party when that was necessary.

"The PRT sends its condolences to his second wife, Muriel McAvoy, and to his children and grandchildren, and to his comrades in struggle in the US and to his friends here in Mexico.

"Secretariat of Political Committee."

BEHIND THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE SWP

2. The Loss of Confidence and the Abandonment of Marxism

by Frank Lovell

The Trotskyist movement in the U.S., from its inception, has recognized its fundamental task: "to struggle for the creation of a class movement of the American workers, for the development of class consciousness, and to lead them toward revolutionary concepts in struggle." This is the way the founders of our movement saw the matter and so stated it in the "Platform of the Communist Opposition," published in The Militant in February 1929. (Reprinted in The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31)

This class-struggle concept has guided all our actions through the years. There have been vast changes in the economic and social conditions of life in this country, and great swings in the consciousness of the different economic strata, social classes, and national groups in this society. During the past fifty-five years our movement has been nurtured and shaped by the pressures of world events and by our own responsive history. We have developed our class-conscious responses and our social understanding through our struggle to change society.

The historic development and transformation of the world that our movement has experienced, recorded, and been conditioned by includes the depression years of the 1930s, the rise of the CIO, World War II, the postwar witch-hunt of radicals, the capitalist expansion of the 1950s and early 1960s, the transformation of industrial production from the assembly line to the computerized robot, the world crisis of capitalist economy in the mid-1970s, and the present economic and political crisis in this country. Throughout this entire period, from 1928 until today, the Marxist movement in the U.S. maintained its programmatic and organizational continuity through the Trotskyist cadres orga-

nized and led by James P. Cannon and his successors. The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party was transferred in the 1970s, under the Dobbs-Kerry administration of the party, to Jack Barnes and his circle as the most able and promising of the new generation of radicals that emerged from the youth radicalization of the 1960s.

Under the Barnes leadership something new and entirely unexpected by the overwhelming majority of SWP members happened. The leadership of the party betrayed the program that they were pledged to uphold and scuttled the organization that they were trusted to build. They first began to cautiously reveal their treachery in the meeting of the SWP National Committee immediately following the 1981 convention of the party. During the next two years they stamped out the democratic procedures of the party's internal life in violation of its constitution and tradition, converting it from the most democratic of all radical organizations into a caricature of its former self.

THE BARNES FACTION IN THE SWP

The Barnes faction is an issue in dispute inside the SWP and in the Fourth International, not because it lacks a recognizable presence, but because Barnes and his close associates deny its existence. They marshaled their reliable majority at the 1981 convention by purging the SWP National Committee of all "untrustworthy" members, and since this was done secretly the faction had no formal or officially recognized existence.

The faction claims that in the Leninist party "the elected leadership" makes all decisions and members have no right to meet independently, discuss, question, revise, or propose counter-measures to "leadership decisions." This leaves no place for factions or opposition tendencies. Therefore, there can be no such formation in the Leninist party as a "Barnes faction." It serves no party purpose and has no reason to exist. In this party all internal discussion is regulated and controlled

This is the final section of a two-part discussion article. The first, subtitled "The Historical and Political Roots," appeared in last month's issue. Readers are invited to submit articles or letters discussing the issues raised by the author.

within the "regularly constituted units" of the party, through channels designated by the appropriate "leadership bodies."

Such rules and regulations are the guidelines of a monolithic party, completely alien to the Leninist concept of democratic centralism. The majority of party members was converted or coerced to accept and comply with these bureaucratic practices over a three-year period which began surreptitiously and experimentally shortly after the revolutionary victories in Grenada and Nicaragua. The narrow group of "central leaders" around Barnes at the time quickly convinced themselves that these events in Central America were harbingers of the revolutionary wave they had long expected, the expansion and continuation of the Cuban revolution.

The Barnes faction coalesced around this simple idea. Many SWP comrades hoped that such a superficial notion -- more impressionistic than thoughtful -- contained the seeds of profound new discoveries. This vain hope grew as much from disappointment with the North American workers as from the revolutions in Central America.

The failure of industrial workers in the U.S. to radicalize politically and begin the revolutionary process in this country after the 1974-75 world crisis of capitalism disillusioned a generation of radicals. By 1980 the revolutions in Central America had become the hope of many middle-aged revolutionary-minded activists in this country, including the Barnes group in the SWP. This generation had radicalized as college students in the 1960s, and their main political experience in the mass movement had been helping to organize antiwar demonstrations. It was easy for them to speculate on the potential of the revolutions that are going on "before our very eyes." It seemed to them quite possible, even probable, that these revolutions in Central America -- "so close to home" -- would spark revolts and uprisings in the U.S. and other centers of imperialist power.

This was a pervasive sentiment in the radical movement at the time and the Barnes leadership in the SWP was susceptible to it. They began to reevaluate their past. Looking back they saw the Cuban revolution as one of the great turning points of history, comparable to the Russian revolution. In the post-World War II period Castro had emerged as the outstanding revolutionary leader, comparable to Lenin.

This was the starting point for the Barnes faction, and for its subsequent

efforts to "Bolshevize" the SWP in the image of what it thinks a replica of today's Cuban Communist Party would be in this country, "a sister party to the Cubans."

The vigorous anti-Trotsky campaign, begun in 1981 and conducted under the pretext of "studying Lenin," has very little to do with understanding the historical, programmatic, and theoretical questions that have arisen. Its original purpose and single-minded goal is to demonstrate that the SWP has adopted the Castroist program and discarded "Trotskyite dogma." This is the sole reason for the declarations by Barnes against the theory of permanent revolution in his rambling public speech to the YSA convention at the end of 1982, "Their Trotsky and Ours." Nothing in this talk shows any serious concern with theory, with the history of Marxist thought, or with a program for revolutionary action.

What the Barnes faction has concluded from the limited personal experiences of its narrow circle of central leaders, after 20 years, is that the Fourth International failed to organize and lead revolutions as promised. But others did, especially Castro. Therefore, the program of the FI must be faulty. And Trotsky, the author of the program, was wrong.

Having reached these profound conclusions, which are largely conditioned by their assumption that all this coincides logically with positions reached by the leadership of the Cuban revolution and other revolutionary leaders in Central America, in "the center of world politics," the Barnes faction projected their grand strategy to launch a new international in collaboration with Castro. One small oversight is their failure to inform their adopted collaborator. There is no indication on the part of Fidel that he knows anything of this, and everything he says and does shows complete uninterest in any international working class organization beyond the network of Stalinist parties and their allies throughout the world.

In their efforts to disassociate themselves from Trotskyism by trying to discredit Trotsky's contributions to the theory and practice of Marxism, the Barnesites have provoked a serious review within the Fourth International of the most fundamental questions. These include, in addition to the theory of permanent revolution, the following: the organizational norms of the Leninist-type party; the strategy of party building; the historic meaning and present value of the formula "workers' and farm-

ers' government"; the three sectors of world revolution and the distinct programmatic needs in the imperialist countries, the colonial world, and the degenerated workers' states; the call for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and other degenerated workers' states (Poland); the necessarily different political tactics under present conditions in the colonial world and in the highly industrialized countries, especially the U.S.; the importance and dangers of electoral politics; revolutionary work among different sectors and strata of the working class in the imperialist countries; a series of derivative questions which grows as the probe of the Barnes faction's revision of Marxism continues.

NEW POLITICS CODIFIED

The omnibus Barnesite resolution, "The Revolutionary Perspective and Leninist Continuity in the United States," contains challenges -- both explicit and implicit -- to the theory and practice of Marxism. It is therefore necessary to list some of these challenges for further discussion and clarification.

This deceptive resolution is intended for the widest possible circulation as attested to by its publication in *New International*, Spring 1985. It already has a history and a certain odious reputation. Drafted for the approval of the 1984 SWP convention, it was adopted at the party's special pre-World Congress convention and then submitted to the 1985 World Congress of the FI where it was overwhelmingly rejected. Many aspects of this curious document remain to be explored.

1) The dialectical method of analysis is challenged by the pragmatism of the Barnesites and their schematic approach to all questions. Marxism without the dialectic contradicts the concept of historical materialism, as Marx and Engels demonstrated. They wrote specifically about their use of dialectical logic which they considered their indispensable tool and their most valuable acquisition. Both Lenin and Trotsky wrote extensively about the dialectical method and its application. In the SWP George Novack has spent his political life in pursuit of the best and most popular ways to explain dialectical logic. All this is discarded by the Barnesites and must be retrieved.

2) The counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism in the working class political movement is questioned by the Barnesites, but only by implication at their

present stage of retreat from Marxism. They are not alone. Since the death of Stalin in 1953 many activists in the radical movement have thought, or acted as if they thought, Stalinism died with Stalin. The heirs of Stalin in the Kremlin today are no less counterrevolutionary than Stalin was in his day.

The victorious colonial revolutions since World War II, especially the Cuban revolution which has received material assistance from the Soviet Union at crucial moments in its struggle to survive the attacks of U.S. imperialism, have convinced some genuine revolutionists in the colonial world that the Stalinist bureaucracy is a reliable ally. A growing number of radicals in the imperialist nations perceive the

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ZIMA 1985

INPREKOR

PRACA GÓRNIKA Zabójstwo Eloi Machoro

Kryzys gospodarczy

DK

UKRAŃSKA
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Pracownicy i Robotnicy



Polish Inprekor is out now!

Since Polish *Inprekor* was first published in October 1981 sixteen issues have appeared.

Inprekor is published every two months as a journal reflecting the point of view of the Fourth International. It addresses itself to the debates that are going on in the Polish workers' movement and mass struggles in other countries.

Issue No 17 is out now with articles on the situation in the Ukraine, the Polish economic crisis and an interview with a Solidarnosc member in the mines in Silesia. There is a thorough analysis on the situation in New Caledonia following the death of Eloi Machoro.

Inprekor can be obtained by writing to PEC, 2 Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France. The subscription rate for one year (six issues) is £8, 12 US dollars or 75 French francs. Make cheques payable to PEC - Polish Inprekor. To support *Inprekor* is to support the emergence of a revolutionary Marxist current inside Poland.

Soviet bureaucracy as a potential ally rather than an enemy of the working class in their own countries. They identify the bureaucracy with the Soviet power and the historic gains of the revolution. They think that because the Soviet bureaucrats are attacked by capitalist politicians in Europe and America, the working class under capitalism will ultimately benefit from a struggle against their own oppressors in defense of the Soviet bureaucrats. Such notions are disproved daily by the working relationship between the Soviet bureaucracy and world imperialism, and by the bureaucracy's conciliatory diplomacy toward the war preparation of U.S. imperialism. Nonetheless, the influence of Stalinism seems to be gaining ground in the working class political movement here in the U.S. Barnes and others in the Trotskyist movement are subject to these pressures and are influenced by them.

3) Can the Stalinist bureaucracy be reformed or is a working class political revolution necessary in the Soviet Union? And what will happen if the government is overthrown in the Soviet Union? Will world imperialism gain? Is it possible that capitalism will be restored? These questions are rife in the U.S. radical movement and are pondered by the leaders of the SWP. This accounts for their present silence on the events in Poland, and the political revolution there.

4) Other commonly discussed questions are related to the struggle between imperialism and the Soviet system: What is the extent of interimperialist rivalry? Will the struggle for greater shares of the world market lead to a breakdown of the imperialist military structure? Can the Soviet Union expect to find allies within the imperialist system? Will the economic crisis of imperialism force the capitalists to seek new markets in China and the Soviet Union? And will this lead to an attempted military invasion of these countries by U.S. forces?

These questions are all present in the 1985 SWP political resolution, stated either directly or by implication. The questions are highly speculative. The answers are not. From the moment of the October revolution in 1917 the Soviet state has been under attack by imperialism. This attack upon the Soviet Union has taken many different forms over the past 67 years, but it has never ceased. One of the by-products of imperialist economic and military encirclement was the rise and consolidation of Stalinism.

The Bolsheviks never dreamed in 1917 that the Russian revolution could endure without the extension of the revolution to Germany and other industrial countries in Europe. They did not believe that the soviet system could develop or endure in a hostile capitalist world. It has endured, but its development is deformed.

The irreconcilable contradiction between nationalized property and private ownership of the means of production remains. The two systems cannot coexist harmoniously. The only assurance that the soviet system will endure and resume a normal growth is the extension of the revolution in the capitalist countries of Europe and America, and the working class political revolution in the Soviet Union. This is as true today as in 1939 on the eve of World War II, when the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed.

5) A section of the Barnesite resolution is a brazen recapitulation of the frame-up methods used in the SWP to expel the opposition tendencies that seek to restore the Marxist program upon which the party was founded and which it developed and defended until 1980. The defense of such bureaucratic practices as the Barnes faction is guilty of in the name of "Leninist continuity in the United States" raises a question here of proletarian morality. This is not the first time Marxists have had to expose such organizational methods in the interest of honesty within the working class political movement and in defense of the integrity of the revolutionary socialist current.

RETURN TO MARXISM

The existing political situation and relations within the revolutionary socialist current require a thorough reexamination of post-World War II history. This can now proceed in accordance with and by extension of decisions taken at the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International.

Congress delegates voted overwhelmingly to reject the organizational concepts and practices of the present SWP leaders and to demand the reinstatement of all bureaucratically expelled SWP members. The exact wording of the congress resolution is forceful: "Whereas these expulsions were carried out in bare-faced violation of the statutes of the Fourth International -- of which the SWP is the fraternal organization in the USA -- and whereas this political purge made a mockery of the rights of minorities inside the SWP, the World Congress demands the collective reintegration of

all the present members of S.A. and F.I.T. who were expelled from the SWP into SWP membership."

The FI, however, has no means of imposing discipline on national sections except through programmatic conviction. Members of a fraternal section such as the SWP can develop a strong and responsible leadership only to the extent that the fundamental Marxist program of the party and the International is understood and applied.

In the case of the SWP a small group of disillusioned leaders under the direction of the party's national secretary used their positions of organizational authority to distort the Marxist program and heritage of the party and to decimate it, and in this way to foreclose both ideological enrichment and numerical growth. To what end? This is the question now belatedly raised in the ranks of the SWP.

There is no organizational solution to the crisis of leadership in the SWP. If by some strange quirk of circumstances, in keeping with its ingrained political duplicity, the Barnes faction should decide to open the doors of the party to all those members it expelled only yesterday, drastic changes would ensue. It would be hard for the party to avoid a thorough review of its history since World War II in relation to the great revolutionary uprisings during this period.

Some such review of events will proceed in one form or another, regardless of organizational relations among the contending political tendencies that have emerged from the SWP since 1981, because the entire radical movement is beginning to reexamine its post-World War II past, and not only in this country. This applies to "the left" everywhere, but especially in the U.S. and Europe.

The Fourth International is uniquely qualified to lead this historical review and the theoretical clarification that will result. In its past development are the experiences and analyses of the World War II partisan movements and their revolutionary promise in Italy, France, Greece, and other countries; the consolidation of workers' states in Eastern Europe, the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949, the extension of the colonial revolution in Korea, Indonesia, Burma, and other Asian countries, the struggle for national independence under Mussadegh in Iran, the victories of the colonial revolution in Cuba and Algeria; the victory in Vietnam; and the current wars and revolutions in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and

Guatemala. It will be rewarding to re-view these events and the participation of revolutionary socialist forces in them as represented by the FI in relation to the analyses of other political currents (Social Democrats and Stalinists), and from the present retrospective vantage point with the aim of active participation in current struggles and unification of the fragmented radical movement.

At the time of the reunification of the revolutionary socialist current in 1963 the congress of the FI adopted a resolution on "Dynamics of World Revolution Today." The central thesis was "the three main forces of world revolution -- the colonial revolution, the political revolution in the degenerated or deformed workers' states, and the proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries -- form a dialectical unity."

The dialectical unity of the three main forces of world revolution was described: "Each force influences the others and receives in return powerful impulses or brakes on its own development. The delay of the proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries has in general undoubtedly prevented the colonial revolution from taking the socialist road as quickly and as consciously as would have been possible under the influence of a powerful revolutionary upsurge or victory of the proletariat in an advanced country."

This description of the revolutionary process, completely valid today, was written more than 20 years ago. Since then the Cuban revolution has been consolidated and is the dominant influence in Latin America against U.S. imperialism. And workers' struggles have broken out against the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe, as presently waged in Poland.

The struggle against U.S. imperialism and for the future of the colonial revolution in Central America and the Caribbean, and by extension in all of Latin America, is the center of attention for the U.S. radical movement and also for part of the union movement. U.S. imperialism is moving to crush Nicaragua and this is recognized as the point of greatest danger to the cause of working people everywhere in the world.

The outcome is more closely related to the struggle for working class emancipation in Poland than most radicals realize. A successful revolution in Poland against the bureaucracy there will release the revolutionary energy of the Polish working class in defense of the colonial revolution and wipe out the false identification by the U.S. ruling

class of the humanitarian goals of socialism with the barbaric totalitarianism of the Soviet bureaucracy which far more closely resembles colonial exploitation than socialist emancipation.

Those who seek to participate most effectively in the struggle for emancipation of the colonial world on the side of the Cuban revolution will benefit from the historical review of post-World War II events. Only in this context can the prospects of the colonial revolution and the urgent need to build the revolutionary socialist movement in the industrial nations of Europe and America be understood and advanced.

The Cuban revolution gains momentum with its advance in Central America, but in some respects this increases imperialist pressures upon the Cuban state. Such pressures are relieved by revolutionary developments in other parts of the world, and especially by the growth of the revolutionary movement in the centers of imperialist power, the U.S. in particular. This interdependence of world revolution is in essence the revolutionary process itself. The social transformation in every sector of the world connects with and suffers from the lag in other sectors.

The Cuban revolution was defended and closely studied by the SWP from the beginning. The record of the revolution and its lessons are summarized in the book, Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution, published by Pathfinder Press. In his 1978 introduction in this book, Joseph Hansen, a leader of the party until his death in 1979, described the position of Marxists at the time. "The stand taken by the Socialist Workers Party towards the Cuban revolution," he said, "flows from its initial analysis of that event. It can be summarized in three points:

"1. For defense of the Cuban revolution against all its enemies. As a

party within the United States, the SWP considers it to be its special duty to foster the strongest possible political opposition to the main enemy of the revolution, American imperialism. This defense is unconditional -- it does not hinge on the attitudes or policies of the Cuban government.

"2. For the development of proletarian forms of democracy in Cuba. The purpose of this is to bring the masses into the decision-making process in the most effective way, thereby strengthening the struggle against bureaucratism. The initiation of workers' councils would add fresh power to the Cuban revolution as living proof that socialism does not entail totalitarianism but on the contrary signifies the extension of democracy to the oppressed in a way that will lead eventually to the withering away of the state.

"3. For the formation of a Leninist-type party that guarantees internal democracy, that is, the right of critical opinion to be heard. The power of a party that safeguards the right to form tendencies or factions was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks. A replica shaped in accordance with Cuban particularities could do much to induce the formation of similar parties in the rest of the world. This would greatly facilitate resolving the crisis in leadership faced by the proletariat internationally, thereby assuring a new series of revolutionary victories."

The review and reevaluation of post-World War II history can help to clear the way for present working class struggles. Along this road the SWP and the radical movement in the U.S. will return to the theory and practice of Marxism. In all sections of the FI the basic Trotskyist program will be vindicated through our efforts and by the logic of the class struggle. □

**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

HALF-TRUTHS AND COVER-UPS

'Intercontinental Press' and the 'Militant' on Indochinese History

by David Williams

Nineteen eighty-five marks the tenth anniversary of the liberation from imperialism of the three countries which made up the French colony of Indochina -- Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea. Both bourgeois political leaders, thinkers and writers, and currents in the workers' movement are using this opportunity to draw conclusions from the experience of the Indochina war, its final result, and the situation in those countries ten years after the revolutionary victory.

The American people have been subjected by the big-business-controlled media to a maudlin display of patriotism and "concern" for the Vietnam veterans, as exemplified by the May 7 tickertape parade in New York City. That parade was led by Long Island assemblyman John L. Behan, a disabled Vietnam veteran. His wheelchair was pushed by--who else?--New York's number one showman, Mayor Edward Koch. Twenty-five thousand veterans marched, but one can be sure that thousands more were muttering, "Just give us jobs and the veterans' benefits we have coming. You can keep your parade."

The war ended in victory for the world proletariat and in defeat for the bourgeoisie, but the results have been mixed for both classes. Revolutionary victory was achieved in Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea; however, that victory has not been extended, nor are there immediate prospects for its extension even after ten years. The Stalinist bureaucracy in China, which, we were told, was trying to topple the "dominoes" all the way to Hawaii, has become one of Washington's staunch allies in the region. Instead of Mao's "Red Book" on Waikiki Beach, we are given the spectacle of McDonald's hamburger stands at the Great Wall.

Furthermore, the worst suffering of the Kampuchean people came after the Khmer Rouge victory, not before, and to this day there is not the slightest hint of proletarian democracy in any of the countries liberated in 1975. Economic scarcity is a daily fact of life for the people of the three countries of Indochina ten years after the end of imperialist domination. The hardships which

the Indochinese people face are caused almost entirely by the United States government and its allies: working people throughout the world should fight for diplomatic recognition of and trade with Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea. However, the only long range solution to the economic problems faced by the Indochinese is extension of the revolution. Unfortunately, the leaders of those revolutions remain chained to the Stalinist policy of "socialism in one country."

THE 'MILITANT' AND 'IP'

Intercontinental Press, which represents the thinking of the Barnes faction in the Fourth International, features in its April 15 issue an article by Will Reissner entitled "Laos: Ten years since liberation." Reissner misses the opportunity to draw conclusions which revolutionists can use to advance proletarian revolution in the countries where IP is circulated, and furthermore covers up for some of the Stalinist betrayals of revolution in Indochina.

Under a subheading which reads, "History of struggle," Reissner says, "On Oct. 12, 1945, following the collapse of the Japanese wartime occupation of Laos, Lao revolutionaries seized power and declared their country independent. But French colonial troops quickly returned to Laos, and French rule was reestablished there, as it was in Vietnam and Kampuchea.

"The peoples of the three countries of Indochina, however, continued fighting for national liberation."

The April 26 issue of the Militant features another article by Reissner, entitled "Why Vietnam defeated world's strongest imperialist power." It makes an almost identical observation: "The Vietnamese established their first independent government in 1945, after the collapse of the Japanese occupation. That victory was snatched away by the return of French colonial troops.

"But the Vietnamese liberation fighters fought back against the French."

Nothing which Reissner says in

these articles is untrue in the strictest sense. However, there is a great deal which Reissner does not say. The French colonial troops did not simply "return" to Indochina -- they were allowed to return as part of the agreements negotiated among the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union as World War II was drawing to a close. Roosevelt (later Truman), Churchill, and Stalin essentially partitioned those parts of the world which had been occupied by the German or Japanese forces. One decision which came out of these negotiations was a partition of Indochina between liberated France and Nationalist China.

Whatever the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party thought of such an idea they did not oppose it, and they actively participated in perpetrating this betrayal of the Indochinese people. If the victory of the Indochinese masses was "snatched away" by the French, this resulted directly from the advice of the Indochinese Communist Party to those masses -- that they should give up power without a fight. This, in turn, led directly to the need for "continued fighting for national liberation," which, as it turned out, required thirty more years of bloody sacrifice.

WHY THE OMISSION?

A great deal has been said about the Barnes faction's rejection of class analysis in favor of a view of the world divided into "camps." Their "campist" view reflects the fundamental problem from which all of the Barnes faction's revisions of a half-century of programmatic continuity flow: the leaders of the SWP have lost confidence in themselves as a leadership, in the program of revolutionary Marxism, and in the North American working class. After losing confidence in their own ideas, they have been quick to assimilate the ideas of others, most specifically the revolutionary leaders of Central America and the Caribbean.

Cuba has abolished capitalism; the Nicaraguan leaders have made it clear that their goal is the same. It is easy to conclude, as Barnes and his associates have done, that "they did it; we haven't; they must be right, and we must be wrong." Experience, however, teaches that easy conclusions are frequently erroneous, for they all too often are not based on thorough assessment of all the facts of the situation.

As important as it is to support

and defend the Nicaraguan and Cuban revolutions it must be recognized that their leaders' analysis of the world tends not to be a class analysis, but a "campist" one. They see the world divided into an imperialist "camp" -- which includes the imperialist countries, right-wing dictatorships in some dominated countries, and even the Chinese workers' state -- and an anti-imperialist "camp" -- which includes themselves, the Warsaw Pact countries, and other governments in dominated countries who have friendly relations with the U.S.S.R. or whose rhetoric is anti-U.S. -- examples are Libya and Iran. This is also the same approach to world events that the Barnes current has begun to use. Because the present SWP leadership is adapting programmatically to this view, it finds it convenient to leave out certain embarrassing historical facts, and this, in turn, accounts for the omissions in Reissner's article concerning events in Indochina after World War II.

THE REALITY IN 1945

The world in 1945 was also divided into "camps," and the Stalinists explicitly rejected class struggle in favor of the struggle between the camps -- which were, of course, the German-Japanese-Italian Axis versus the Allied powers. There was never any thought on the part of the Stalinists that their alliance with Britain, "Free" France, and the U.S. was anything but permanent. They believed -- or said they believed and encouraged their followers to believe -- that the alliance between the Soviets and the imperialist "democracies" was based on genuine antifascism on the part of Roosevelt, Churchill, De Gaulle, and Chiang Kai-shek. The invitation -- its right name -- to the French and Nationalist Chinese forces to return to power in Indochina must be seen in that context, and the people of Indochina paid a heavy price for it.

If the Stalinists rejected class analysis in favor of a "campist" one, the imperialists never did -- and for that matter, never will. Reissner says, "The peoples of the three countries of Indochina, however, continued fighting for national liberation." It would be more precise to say that the revolutionary forces of Indochina resumed fighting -- for sheer survival. The imperialists never considered their alliance with the Soviet Union to be anything but a temporary expediency, to make possible victory over their imperialist rivals in Berlin and Tokyo. As soon as they had

achieved that victory they turned on their Stalinist former allies, and the Stalinists were totally unprepared. The cost in lives and human suffering was terrible.

Stalinists and their apologists will often accuse Trotskyists of blaming the Stalinist, people's front, national liberation, or labor leadership for counterrevolutionary bloodshed and of failing to blame the imperialists, who, after all, are doing the killing. Of course, the charge is completely false, but that is not the point. What do they expect the imperialists to be but imperialists? Do they think they will give up without a fight? No amount of moral persuasion will ever make the imperialists allow the oppressed people of the world to live in peace and freedom. They must be overthrown on a world scale. The policies of the leadership of the working class or national liberation struggle can make a difference in whether the struggle ends in victory or defeat and in the suffering imposed on the people in the course of the struggle. Of course, we all have to organize the strongest possible protest against imperialist war and demonstrate to the working people that the concern of the impe-

rialist "democracies" for peace and human rights is a thorough fraud. However, as revolutionary Marxists, we are duty-bound to criticize those leaders whose policies make revolutionary victory more difficult, even as we support and participate in that struggle for revolutionary victory. Neither sectarian abstention from a misled struggle nor adaptation to a false leadership is an acceptable course of action for a revolutionary party.

Unfortunately, the current course of the SWP leadership is an erratic alternation of sectarian abstention followed by adaptation to other leaderships. SWP leaders are fond of saying, "We have much to learn from those who have made successful revolutions." That is true; however, uncritical acceptance of anyone's ideas is a dangerous practice, and certainly in total contradiction to Marxist thinking. Revolutionists have to use their own minds to analyze revolutionary victories and defeats, in order to learn the lessons which can help them in their political work. Reissner, by ignoring some of those lessons, has done a disservice to the revolutionary movement and, in reality, to his own party. □

JAMES P. CANNON ON THE DEGENERATION OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The degeneration of the [U.S.] Communist Party began when it abandoned the perspective of revolution in this country, and converted itself into a pressure group and cheering squad for the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia -- which it mistakenly took to be the custodian of a revolution "in another country."...

The degeneration of the Communist Party is not to be explained by the summary conclusion that the leaders were a pack of scoundrels to begin with ... but by the circumstance that they fell victim to a false theory and a false perspective.

What happened with the Communist Party would happen without fail to any other party, including our own, if it should abandon its struggle for a social revolution in this country, as the realistic perspective of our epoch, and degrade itself to the role of sympathizer of revolutions in other countries.

I firmly believe that American revolutionists should indeed sympathize with revolutions in other lands, and try to help them in every way they can. But the best way to do that is to build a party with a confident perspective of a revolution in this country. Without that perspective, a communist or socialist party belies its name. It ceases to be a help and becomes a hindrance to the revolutionary workers' cause in its own country. And its sympathy for other revolutions isn't worth much either.

James P. Cannon, Notebook of an Agitator, Pathfinder Press, 1973, p. 340 ("Notes for a Historian," March 1954)

THE CONSEQUENCES OF BARNESISM IN CANADA

by Tom Baker

I am releasing this statement as an open letter in order that the many comrades who have already resigned as well as those in the youth committee may have access to the political conclusions I have reached.

I hereby resign from membership in the Revolutionary Workers League/Ligue Ouvriere Revolutionnaire. This is not a decision arrived at hastily. I was a founding member of the RWL and for several years a member of central leadership bodies; before that I was a member of the League for Socialist Action/Young Socialists from 1969 until the fusion into the RWL. For approximately one year I have raised my political differences inside the organization at the appropriate opportunities. I now feel the RWL is essentially immune to change from within. It has broken from the very foundations and heritage of the Trotskyist movement in this country and is close to a state of organizational collapse.

Over the past 18 months on average, nearly one member per month has resigned from the Toronto branch alone! Recruitment is stagnant. The highly touted "turn to industry" lies in shambles, rapidly reduced to a turn to the "most oppressed" -- the garment workers. Despite an almost single-sided emphasis by the Political Committee on Quebec -- the LOR has been unable to recruit and integrate young Quebecois. The RWL is almost totally outside of the New Democratic Party and trade union movement in a largely self-imposed exile. Recent organizational cuts in response to loss of membership have resulted in the survival of only two branches -- Toronto and Montreal. Socialist Voice and Lutte Ouvriere have been drastically reduced in size.

The RWL exists outside of the organized workers' movement and plays only a

very marginal role in any social struggles. This is primarily due not to objective difficulties but is a reflection of a lack of confidence in the working class as it actually exists. After eight years the RWL has yet to develop even a semblance of a program for the pan-Canadian revolution.

Members and supporters have little idea about what the organization actually stands for. A highly selective reading of early Lenin has provided a theoretical cover for major programmatic revisions. The pillars of the Trotskyist movement such as the theory of the permanent revolution have been jettisoned in favor of a resurrected adaptation of the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." This concept of the early Bolsheviks held that there would be a distinct stage after the overthrow of the government when a two-class government would stimulate the capitalist economy. Only much later would there be an independent proletarian dictatorship established that would move decisively towards socialism. By 1917 the old conception, derived from Plekhanov, was rejected and Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution (anti-feudal, democratic revolution, led by the working class, flowing into the fight for socialism in an uninterrupted fashion) was embraced by Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

It was Stalin and his collaborators who restored the earlier stagist theory to justify class collaboration with the capitalists in popular fronts. Unfortunately many revolutionaries in the world have been miseducated by Stalin's followers. Only the Fourth International, as an international working class current, has consistently defended the program that brought the Bolsheviks to power. The working class is the only consistently revolutionary class that can rally other layers of the oppressed in a successful war against the capitalist system. In Nicaragua today we see a proletarian party, the FSLN, has led the peasantry and those oppressed by imperialism in the establishment of the second workers' state in the western

This document was originally entitled "Letter of resignation from the Revolutionary Workers League," Canadian section of the Fourth International, and was dated April 19, 1985.

hemisphere. Nicaragua is not a bourgeois state, although many capitalist economic relations remain. It is not a two-class state; the workers and toilers control the repressive apparatus. It is a dictatorship of the proletariat, not the bourgeoisie.

TURN

A hallmark of distinction of the RWL in the far left over the past six years has been the turn to industry! At the 1979 congress of the Fourth International, there was an agreement among all the sections to orient to organized workers in the most strategic industries. These are the most economically powerful sectors of the working class. The RWL interpreted this decision as one of getting the entire membership (except handicapped and staffers) into industrial fractions -- even dismantling other long-standing trade union interventions in the process.

Tremendous energy has been expended upon efforts to colonize specific targeted job locations. Permanent jobs committees exist to lead this never-ending process. Unfortunately, these targets are ever-changing -- from one industry to another, and from one plant or union priority to another. This "revolutionary grasshopper" conception of the turn has been made into a virtue to be upheld by the entire Fourth International! The current targeted priority is the garment industry. The whole emphasis is on location of work, not on political content of the intervention. Members who finally reach the mecca of the particular industry or plant that has been prioritized often become quickly discouraged when they see there is no strategy to actually build a class-struggle current in the trade union movement. Politics is reduced to "talking socialism" to coworkers and jumping from plant to plant. New members of the youth committee are rushed off into industry without political education to prepare them for the challenges of being a lone socialist on the job.

Generally there has not been an orientation to building and strengthening the trade unions. In essence there is a fundamental refusal to take on responsibilities within the labor movement, or to organize new union locals. To be a shop steward is viewed as becoming part of the labor bureaucracy. This highly schematic application of the turn to industry has prevented the RWL from sinking roots in the working class organizations and building solid well-placed industrial fractions. The RWL

consequently has little or no respect as a current amongst industrial workers.

Many of the resignations have been comrades in the targeted work areas. They were most affected by the inadequacy of the trade union perspective. Over the years many other layers of comrades felt forced to decide between being in industry or leaving the organization. Otherwise, it was understood, they could not be genuine members -- they would have little to contribute.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The RWL has broken from the long-standing Trotskyist heritage of building a left wing in the NDP. The perspective of struggling for policies that would give rise to a fighting labor party, capable of forming a government independent of the bosses, has been dumped. Major changes in approach have occurred without democratic discussion, leaving many comrades confused and disturbed.

The RWL, a tiny group of 65 members, calls itself a "political party in opposition to the NDP." When the NDP leadership expelled me, on the basis of this very charge, the RWL proudly said "Guilty." Expulsions are considered a propaganda opening, not an attack on internal democracy within the workers' movement. At last year's provincial NDP convention, the RWL betrayed those who were willing to defend it and accepted the expulsion without a fight. This was seen as a sectarian turn away from the NDP rank and file.

While still calling for an NDP vote, the RWL is abstaining from participation in the Ontario provincial election campaign (except one poll!) and is running its own candidate as "the only real expression of independent working class political action." This failure to take advantage of the election opening constitutes an ultra-left boycott.

QUEBEC

The Political Committee has centered almost the totality of its attention in recent years to Quebec. Since the split of almost the entire Quebecois wing of the RWL a few years ago, this Quebec orientation has been exaggerated to the extent that often the rest of the RWL is left basically without direction. Several branches had to be closed; Pathfinder Press was dismantled, etc. Today the RWL is even less rooted in Quebec -- the branch is largely isolated from the political life of the city as it struggles to support the Central Office apparatus. The tunnel vision approach to

Quebec has played a big part in the decline of the organization to the point where today the Vancouver branch is being closed.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The RWL/YSOC has become so wrapped up in self-generated internal activities such as election campaigns, selling Socialist Voice at plant gates, and endless internal meetings that there is little energy or interest in linking up with those in struggle. The RWL has a very minimal intervention in the emerging social movements such as OCAC or the anti-intervention coalition. There is a lethargic response to openings that arise; a sectarian "build the RWL" intervention; and a lack of consistent effort or accepting of responsibility to help lead these movements. Consequently, despite any good intentions, little political clarity of substance can be offered to these movements. The best activists are not attracted to the RWL, and the members of the RWL miss out on the opportunity to develop as effective mass leaders.

This generally abstentionist approach is interrupted occasionally by forays into the coalitions, only to withdraw again before any meaningful work can be done and real links with those in struggle established. This is a complete departure from the Trotskyist heritage of being the best builders and leaders of the anti-Vietnam War movement and the abortion fights of the early '70s. The industrial turn has become a cover for abstention from political activity with those in struggle.

INTERNAL LIFE

The leadership encourages a stifling internal "political homogeneity" rather than an active exchange of views and tendency formations that have been characteristics of our movement. This is falsely called "building a more Leninist party." Although little actual political clarity has been reached on any of the strategic questions of the pan-Canadian revolution, there is a smug mood that we have the monopoly on the truth. Criticism of the program or leadership internally is viewed as disruptive at best, more likely an act of disloyalty. Errors are seldom admitted or analyzed. Loss of membership is chalked up to the pressures of capitalism and considered not worthy of internal self-examination.

Isolated and moribund youth committees continue to hang on. Largely com-

posed of party cadres, these groups lead young workers through educationals and try to get members into industry. Generally, the level of political activity of the youth committees is very low. Few young people stay around long. There is very limited internal democracy. They are not able to communicate with one another in different cities, and most reports are secondhand from the branch. Youth members were not allowed to participate in the pre-World Congress convention discussion and have no access to discussions within the RWL or the Fourth International. Members of the RWL are forbidden to reveal any political differences with members of the youth. In practice, the YSOC must carry out the line of the RWL -- while having no real input into the decisions of the RWL.

A similar relationship exists with former members who still sympathize with the RWL. In some cases they are part of interventional units. They must remain passive and uncritical of the RWL leadership and program -- or risk being cut off! The leadership attempts to maintain "family ties" so as to have access to their energy and finances yet no forum exists for political concerns to be raised.

Over the years, the RWL leadership has encouraged a bitter, anti-Fourth International attitude in the ranks. This was seen as a part of orienting to broad new revolutionary forces internationally, and building a "new mass international." This World Congress pre-convention discussion was held with no opening of the pre-convention discussion bulletin. A very short discussion period was conducted during the Christmas period where some key documents up for adoption at the World Congress were not even presented, much less discussed. Many comrades were not sufficiently motivated to even read the documents, or attend pre-convention discussions.

A stifling internal regime exists in the branches -- one that virtually dictates where members should live, where they ought to work, when and where they should take their holidays, lifestyles, and even who their friends are. This total control resembles the norms of a religious sect.

CONCLUSION

I remain loyal to the long traditions and militant struggles of the Trotskyist movement in this country. While I can give no support to what the RWL has become, I do look forward to joining with my old comrades in future

struggles. I look forward to the re-establishment of a viable pan-Canadian section of the Fourth International. It will obviously include not only those organizations that support the Fourth International but also many comrades who felt obliged to leave the RWL over the years as well as newly radicalizing militants who will embrace revolutionary communism.

Young people are radicalizing in the activists' coalitions, in the trade unions, and in the NDP. I think it is crucial for experienced comrades to join these militants, pass on the historic lessons of the struggles of our class, and help point the way forward. The sectarian demise of the RWL has reached the point where one can only remain politically effective as a revolutionary Marxist outside of its ranks. Although occasional corrections of the worst errors may occur, it will take larger events in the struggle itself to save any segment of the RWL.

Today there are thousands of people mobilizing in defense of the Nicaraguan revolution, fighting for Choice, and waging other social struggles. The majority of supporters of the Fourth International in Canada are now outside of the ranks of the RWL. The Gauche Socialiste is a vibrant, activist organization in Quebec with impressive publications and a growing membership. It, along with the Alliance for Socialist Action in English Canada, now have formal ties with the Fourth International. Even the Political Committee of the RWL recognizes these groups and has agreed to begin collaboration with them.

The Socialist Workers Collective in Toronto is part of the cross-Canada ASA. The SWC, despite being much smaller than the Toronto RWL branch, leads the anti-intervention work, and actively participates in OCAC, international solidarity, NDP, and the trade union movement. It also educates its membership and participates fully with international co-thinkers. Although I have differences with the SWC and do not intend to join at this time, I feel it is closest to the type of movement I gave most of my adult life to.

I intend to plunge into political activity, into a genuine exchange of perspectives, into building real independent working class political action. I urge others to seriously consider your political relationship with the RWL, to doubt everything (as Marx said), to look around and join the struggle.

I would gladly appreciate discussing my perspectives with all interested comrades. □

CRISIS IN THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

An Answer to Jack Barnes

BY CLIFF CONNER

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

60¢

CANADIAN FOURTH INTERNATIONALISTS CALL CONVENTION

In an important step forward for rebuilding the Canadian Trotskyist movement, the National Steering Committee of the Alliance for Socialist Action has called "all members and supporters of the ASA, and non-affiliated supporters of the Fourth International in English Canada, to a national convention to be held November 22-24, 1985." The call,

adopted at a meeting of the ASA Steering Committee in May, further states, "The convention will discuss and vote on proposals to begin to transform the ASA from a federation of socialist political collectives into a democratic centralist revolutionary organization, in solidarity with the Fourth International."

The Alliance for Socialist Action in Canada was formed last year as a result of discussions between organizations which had previously been set up independently in Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver. These four socialist "collectives" -- as they call themselves--share a common tradition. Their members previously belonged to the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL), official section of the Fourth International in English Canada.

In response to a severe internal crisis in the RWL in recent years, many members have left that organization. Others were expelled--in trials that were similar to those which took place in the U.S. SWP during the 1982-84 purge of oppositionists. A small proportion of these comrades decided to organize themselves in the four groups which now comprise the ASA.

At the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International, the ASA was recognized as an organization with which our world movement wanted to maintain fraternal relations. The congress did not, however, recognize it as a sympathizing section, precisely because ASA remained a loose affiliation of independent local collectives. The coming convention, if it is successful in carrying out the objectives stated in the call, will be a step in the direction of putting together a cohesive national organization.

The ASA, which is limited to English Canada, maintains fraternal relations with another Canadian organization -- Gauche Socialiste. GS, which was granted sympathizing status by the World Congress, is an active revolutionary socialist organization in Quebec, with branches in Montreal and Quebec City. □

International VIEWPOINT

International Viewpoint, the official English-language publication of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, is a review of news and Marxist analysis. It comes to you twice a month directly from Paris by air mail.

In addition to providing first-hand reports of the struggles of working people around the world, *International Viewpoint* tells the truth about the positions of the Fourth International and its sections on the Central American and Caribbean revolutions; the Polish Solidarity workers' movement and its supporters around the world; the anti-nuclear and antiwar movements in Europe and America; and other subjects that the SWP leadership systematically distorts or passes over in silence.

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DON'T 'TIGHTEN' THE SWP MORE, OR YOU'LL STRANGLE IT TO DEATH

An Introduction to a New Pamphlet by James P. Cannon

by George Breitman

On April 8, 1983, a membership meeting of the Bay Area District of the Socialist Workers Party (from branches in San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose) was held in San Jose to hear a report on the latest three in a series of expulsions being engineered by the SWP "central leadership team" headed by Jack Barnes. During the discussion period, Asher Harer, a veteran party member from San Francisco, made some comments about the newly announced "organizational norm" prohibiting SWP members from communicating with members of other branches under pain of expulsion. Harer said that if James P. Cannon, the principal founder of the SWP, were alive today, he could not exist in the SWP. Cannon often communicated directly with members in other branches, on all sorts of questions, and Harer said he had a file of Cannon letters to prove it.

Harer was answered by Clifton DeBerry, a member of the national Control Commission, a former member of the National Committee, and a former presidential candidate, who said: "If James P. Cannon wrote such letters today, he would be expelled." DeBerry added that the SWP is a "more disciplined" party today than in Cannon's time. Some NC members who supported the new norms were also present, but none differentiated themselves from what DeBerry had said.

DeBerry's remarks were not repeated in written form, then or later, but they were very revealing. For more than a year the SWP leadership had been accusing oppositionists in the NC of violating the party's organizational principles ("norms"), which the leadership allegedly was trying to maintain

and defend. And now DeBerry had blurted out the truth: Even the founder of the party would have been ousted as "undisciplined" if he had lived to 1983 and tried to function in accord with the organizational norms that prevailed in the party from its founding in 1938 to his death in 1974. Since these norms had never been changed in Cannon's time, or later, they were being violated all right -- not by the oppositionists but by the leadership itself, which was reinterpreting them and giving them a new content without ever formally discussing or formally changing them.

In the following year the SWP leadership expelled all known or suspected oppositionists, dissidents, or critics. The real reason they were expelled was that they had political differences with or doubts about the leadership's new orientation toward Castroism and away from Trotskyism, and that the leadership was afraid to debate this orientation with them in front of the SWP membership. The ostensible reason given by the leadership was that the expelled members had in various ways violated the party's traditional organizational principles, especially the 1965 resolution on "The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party."

The present pamphlet consists of three letters and the text of a talk by Cannon in 1966 and 1967, which prove conclusively that Cannon did not share the current SWP leadership's interpretation of the 1965 resolution. The real tradition of the SWP on democratic centralism is different than the present leadership makes it out to be. Like Trotsky, Cannon is a witness against the revisionist political and organizational policies of the Barnes group.

Cannon was 75 years old and living in Los Angeles in 1965. He was national chairman of the party but no longer responsible for its day-to-day activity, which was handled by the Political Committee and national secretary Farrell Dobbs from the party center in New York. When the PC decided to submit a resolution on organizational principles to the 1965 convention, it chose

This is an introduction to a new pamphlet containing letters and a talk by James P. Cannon about SWP problems that will be published this summer by the F.I.T.

The introduction has been changed slightly for publication here so that it can be read without the Cannon texts that will accompany it in pamphlet form.

a committee of Dobbs, George Novack, and Cannon to prepare a draft. Dobbs wrote it and Novack edited it. A copy was sent to Cannon, who sent it back without comment. He thought the draft was poorly written and too ambiguous on certain key points, but did not undertake to amend or redraft it. He did not attend the 1965 convention, which adopted the resolution by a vote of 51 to 8.

In 1968 Cannon discontinued direct correspondence with the party center in New York. But before that happened, he wrote and said some things in 1966 and 1967 which showed that he disagreed with PC members who were interpreting the 1965 resolution as a signal to "tighten" or "centralize" the party, which he believed could only damage it, perhaps fatally.

1. DON'T TRY TO ENFORCE A NONEXISTENT LAW

Cannon's letter of February 8, 1966, had the following background: Arne Swabeck, a party founder and NC member, had been trying for seven years to convert the SWP from Trotskyism to Maoism. Despite repeated efforts before and during SWP national conventions in 1959, 1961, 1963, and 1965, his small group made little headway among the members. Increasingly he and his group began to ignore the normal channels for discussion in the party, and to communicate their ideas to selected members by mail. This led to demands by Larry Trainor, an NC member in Boston, for disciplinary action against Swabeck and his ally in the NC, Richard Fraser. Through a circular letter for the PC Tom Kerry announced that the matter would be taken up at a plenum of the NC to be held at the end of February.

Cannon's letter was addressed to the supporters of the NC majority tendency (which excluded the supporters of the Swabeck and Fraser-Clara Kaye tendencies, etc.). Cannon tried to convince the majority that political discussion and education were the answer to the minority tendencies, not disciplinary action. "There is absolutely no party law or precedent for such action," he said, "and we will run into all kinds of trouble in the party ranks, and the International, if we try this kind of experiment for the first time. ... It would be too bad if the SWP suddenly decided to get tougher than the Communist Party [of the 1920s] and try to enforce a nonexistent law -- which can't be enforced without creating all kinds of discontent and disruption." (Emphasis added)

This was written five months after the adoption of the 1965 resolution. It demonstrates that Cannon saw nothing in that resolution that could be cited as "party law or precedent" for the kind of disciplinary action taken by the Barnes leadership in the 1980s.

The February 1966 meeting of the NC found Cannon's arguments convincing. They did not want to conduct, for "the first time" in the party's history, the experiment of trying to enforce "a non-existent law." So the whole question was dropped -- until after Cannon's death.

2. REASONS FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE SWP AND FOR ITS NEW VITALITY IN THE 1960s

Cannon's September 6, 1966, talk was one of "my last speeches before I fell into retirement, so to speak," he said shortly before his death. It was given to a Labor Day weekend educational conference at a camp near San Francisco, and it was obviously intended primarily for members of the SWP and YSA, rather than for the general public. The form of this talk was that of a discussion about the history of the SWP and the FI, which Cannon used to express his thinking about the problems facing the SWP in 1966, its strengths and weaknesses, the pressures it was feeling, and the lessons from the past that it could learn for the present and the future. Although the talk was couched mainly in historical terms, experienced listeners understood that Cannon was saying, "I think we have some serious problems now and we'd better think about how to handle them." The SWP leadership never printed this talk (which was transcribed from a taped recording and edited by Evelyn Sell 18 years later, after her expulsion from the SWP as an oppositionist, and was printed in the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, No. 14, December 1984).

Cannon's main concern here was that some SWP and YSA leaders were not sufficiently resisting and opposing the harmful influences of the "New Left" to which they were subjected in the antiwar and student movements. Some "younger comrades," he said quite openly, gave him the impression that they had not fully assimilated the cardinal principle of internationalism. His stress on the SWP as "revolutionary continuators" was directed not only against the New Left but against those in the SWP and YSA who disregarded this factor or thought it insignificant. His demand for polemics with opponent tendencies ("the mark of a revolutionary party") stemmed from his conviction that there was a reluctance

among SWP and YSA leaders to openly explain their differences with the New Left. Similarly with most of the talk -- it was not just a criticism of the New Left but of party and YSA members who he thought were defaulting on the theoretical and educational struggle against New Leftism.

But Cannon did not fail also to raise the questions about party democracy that had been on his mind during the previous two or more years. He began by touching on the "flexible democracy" that had enabled the party to survive historically: "We never tried to settle differences of opinion by suppression. Free discussion -- not every day in the week but at stated regular times, with full guarantees for the minority -- is a necessary condition for the health and strength of an organization such as ours." It never occurred to him to add that any of this had been superseded by the 1965 resolution.

Continuing, he noted that factionalism can get out of hand or become unprincipled. "But on the other hand," he said, "if a party can live year after year without any factional disturbances, it may not be a sign of health -- it may be a sign that the party's asleep; that it's not a real live party. In a live party you have differences, differences of appraisal, and so on. But that's a sign of life." The present SWP leaders hardly ever say things like that any more; and even when they do, they mean something different than Cannon meant.

3. A TREND IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

In 1966 some SWP members raised the question of codifying parts of the 1965 resolution through amendments to the party's constitution at the next national convention. A PC-appointed constitution committee (Reba Hansen, Harry Ring, Jean Simon [Tussey]) began, in consultation with national organization secretary Ed Shaw, to consider proposed changes for the constitution, including one to alter the way the national Control Commission was elected and functioned.

In his response on November 12, 1966 (reprinted from Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, No. 8, June 1984), Cannon was quite disturbed by this proposal, especially because he saw it as part of a dangerous trend: "As far as I can see all the new moves and proposals to monkey with the Constitution which has served the party so well in the past, with the aim of 'tightening' centralization, represent a trend in the wrong

direction at the present time. The party (and the YSA) is too 'tight' already, and if we go much further along this line we can run the risk of strangling the party to death."

Most of Cannon's letter was an explanation of why the party would be better off if the Control Commission remained an "independent" or "separate" body elected by the national convention as a whole than it would be as a mere subcommittee of the NC. But he also seized the opportunity to assert the necessity to "practice what we preach" about existing constitutional provisions "to protect every party member against possible abuse of authority by the National Committee." There was nothing ambiguous about his position:

"In the present political climate and with the present changing composition of the party, democratic centralism must be applied flexibly. At least ninety percent of the emphasis should be placed on the democratic side and not on any crackpot schemes to 'streamline' the party to the point where questions are unwelcomed and criticism and discussion stifled. That is a prescription to kill the party...."

Cannon clearly did not feel that the 1965 resolution justified or authorized the kind of undemocratic changes that the "centralizing" Barnes leadership made in the name of the 1965 document in the 1970s and 1980s. Cannon's letter was effective -- none of the proposals he warned against were recommended by the constitution committee or adopted at the 1967 convention.

4. THE SWP'S GREAT TRADITION

The Arne Swabeck case came up again in 1967, when both an SWP national convention and an FI world congress were scheduled. By then Swabeck had lost all hope in the SWP and the FI. Instead of trying once more to convince their members, he publicly attacked the SWP's policies in a letter to a hostile political group in England (the Healyites). For this deliberate violation of discipline, the PC asked the NC to suspend him from membership pending the coming convention.

Cannon had no sympathy whatever for Swabeck's politics or organizational practices, but he felt it would be "awkward" to begin the pre-convention and pre-world congress discussions by suspending the one articulate critic of the party's positions and actions. He therefore urged the PC to handle Swabeck's provocation by publishing his letters

together with a comprehensive political answer to them. This "subordination of disciplinary measures to the bigger aims of political education" -- which he called a continuation of the party's great tradition -- had always served the party well in the past, he argued in his letter of June 27, 1967, and in the Swabeck case would "better serve the education of the new generation of the party and the consolidation of party opinion" than would the proposed suspension.

Most members of the NC disagreed with Cannon. They felt Swabeck's violation of discipline was too flagrant to be ignored, and they felt that he already had been answered politically over and over again, so that disciplinary action in this case would not represent any rupture with the SWP's great tradition. The NC suspended Swabeck, who continued to attack the SWP publicly, and soon after he was expelled. The differences in this case between the NC majority and Cannon were tactical, and it is possible to see the logic and merits in both their positions. But perhaps Cannon was looking a little farther ahead than most of the NC members.

Swabeck had so discredited himself, Cannon told the PC, that the immediate effect of the party's reaction to the new provocation would not be very great whether he was suspended or not. "But the long range effect on the political education of the party, and its preparation to cope with old problems in new forms, can be very great indeed." It is clear from this that Cannon was concerned with something bigger than the fate of Swabeck; that he was trying to alert the party to dangers that transcended the issue of whether or not to suspend Swabeck prior to the convention; that he feared mistakes on this issue could have damaging long range effects on the party, its political education, and its ability to fulfill its revolutionary mission.

The Swabeck case was soon forgotten, but the dangers that worried Cannon are worth recalling today, after the SWP leadership, in a brutal break with the party's tradition of subordinating disciplinary measures to poli-

tical discussion and clarification, expelled and in other ways drove out any and all members who were suspected of having oppositional views (whether they were articulate or not). The SWP leadership "justified" this purge by accusing the expellees of being disrupters and splitters who, "like Swabeck," were outside the party only because of their own indiscipline and disloyalty. But everybody in the SWP knows that most of the expellees fought to remain in the party, unlike Swabeck, and are still fighting to be reinstated, also unlike Swabeck. Most members of the FI know this, too, because at their world congress in February 1985, they voted overwhelmingly to demand the reinstatement of the purged members. The fight for the SWP's tradition continues, but now the SWP leadership is fighting on the other side.

In May 1983, a month after the Harer-DeBerry exchange in San Jose, the NC held a plenum in New York where oppositionists contrasted Cannon's positions on democratic centralism with those of the Barnes group. Barnes finally took the floor and said, "It looks as though we are going to have to rescue Cannon from these people the same way we rescued Trotsky from the sectarians." Barnes had "rescued" Trotsky at a YSA convention on December 31, 1982, in a talk entitled "Their Trotsky and Ours" (New International, Fall 1983). It was rather a unique kind of rescue since in this talk Barnes tried to demolish Trotsky and most of his work as sectarian and harmful. A similar "rescue" of Cannon would mean a wholesale reevaluation of his work and his place in the history of the SWP and the FI. Even as Barnes uttered this promise or threat, a dossier was being compiled that would "prove" Cannon had been a "Stalinophobe" in the 1930s and 1940s, etc. Whether or not such material will be published, it stands to reason that the Barnes group will have to differentiate itself from Cannon and Cannonism more and more as it proceeds further away from them politically and organizationally. The antidote includes an objective reading of Cannon's writings, of which there are fortunately many in print.

May 1985

FROM THE ARSENAL OF MARXISM

Antonio Gramsci on the 'Democratic Dictatorship' Concept

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), a founder of Italian communism and a revolutionary martyr, was living in Vienna in exile from Mussolini's fascist regime in 1924, when he was invited to give other Italian Communist Party leaders his opinion, among other things, of the dispute that had recently broken out in the Russian CP between the leadership team of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin (the "Leninist nucleus" or "triumvirate") and the Left Opposition headed by Trotsky. In passing, Gramsci also expressed the then common understanding of informed communists about the meaning and content of the pre-1917 slogan of the Bolsheviks for a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." Gramsci was a creative theoretician and student of twists in historic development but he probably would have been surprised if anyone had said that 60 years later people who were aspiring to be Leninists (like the leadership team in the U.S. Socialist Workers Party) would deny the view about "democratic dictatorship" shared by everyone in the Comintern in 1924 who was not committed to the triumvirate's positions. The following excerpts are from a letter Gramsci wrote to Togliatti, Terracini, and others on February 9, 1924, four months after the beginning of the Stalin-Trotsky dispute and a few weeks after the death of Lenin:

"So far as Russia is concerned, I have always known that in the topography of the factions and tendencies, Radek, Trotsky and Bukharin occupied a left position, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin a right position, while Lenin was in the centre and acted as arbiter in the whole situation. This, of course, in current political language.

"The so-called Leninist nucleus, as is well known, maintains that these 'topographic' positions are absolutely illusory and fallacious, and in its polemics it has continually demonstrated how the so-called lefts are nothing but Mensheviks, who cloak themselves in revolutionary language but are incapable of assessing the real relations of con-

crete forces. It is well known, in fact, that throughout the history of the Russian revolutionary movement Trotsky was politically to the left of the Bolsheviks, while on organizational questions he often made a bloc with and actually could not be distinguished from the Mensheviks. It is well known that in 1905, Trotsky already thought that a socialist and working-class revolution could take place in Russia, while the Bolsheviks only aimed to establish a political dictatorship of the proletariat allied to the peasantry that would serve as a framework for the development of capitalism, which was not to be touched in its economic structure. It is well known that in November 1917, while Lenin and the majority of the party had gone over to Trotsky's view and intended to take over not merely political power but also economic power, Zinoviev and Kamenev remained in the traditional party view and wanted a revolutionary coalition government with the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries. They therefore left the CC of the party, published statements in non-Bolshevik papers and came very close to a split....

"In the recent polemic which has broken out in Russia, it is clear that Trotsky and the opposition in general, in view of the prolonged absence of Lenin from the leadership of the party, have been greatly preoccupied about the danger of a return to the old mentality, which would be damaging to the revolution. Demanding a greater intervention of proletarian elements in the life of the party and a diminution of the powers of the bureaucracy, they want basically to ensure the socialist and proletarian character of the revolution, and to prevent a gradual transition to the democratic dictatorship -- which was still the programme of Zinoviev and Co. in November 1917. This seems to me to be the situation in the Russian party...; the only novelty is the passage of Bukharin to the Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin group." (Political Writings (1921-1926), edited by Quintin Hoare, International Publishers, 1978, pp. 191-2) □

LENIN BEFORE WORLD WAR I

Having read Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International, I find it hard to believe that Leon Trotsky was right in 1932 when he wrote: "The capitulation of the German Social Democracy on August 4 [1914] was entirely unexpected by Lenin." (Reprinted in your Bulletin No. 19, page 27)

After all his insights into the false positions of the opportunists and revisionists in the Second International and his warnings against them, how could Lenin have expected anything but capitulation when the war broke out? Don't tell us that he expected the opportunists and revisionists to conduct a revolutionary struggle against war!

A YSA member
New York

Reply by George Breitman: No, Lenin did not expect the corrupt and reformist elements in the Second International to behave like revolutionaries in the test of war. But he also did not expect that the reformists and opportunists would be so strong when war began that they would be able to line these parties up behind the capitalists in almost every section of the International. That took him and most of the other genuine revolutionaries by surprise.

The Trotsky passage cited refers to Lenin's reaction to the great betrayal by the German Social Democratic leadership in 1914. There is another example about a case closer to home for Lenin -- that of Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism and Lenin's admired teacher for many years. By 1914 Lenin knew Plekhanov better and was well acquainted with many of his shortcomings. Even so, at first he could not believe that Plekhanov would support the hated tsar Nicholas in the war. Here is a passage from Reminiscences of Lenin by N.D. Krupskaya, Lenin's companion, describing Lenin's reaction in October 1914, two months after the war began, when he heard that Plekhanov had made a farewell speech in Paris in honor of Russian radicals (Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, and others) who had volunteered to fight in the French army:

"Plekhanov's position worried Ilyich [Lenin] very much. He could not believe that Plekhanov had become a 'defencist.' 'I just can't believe it,' he said, adding thoughtfully, 'it must be the effect of his military past.'" (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1959, p. 286)

If Lenin groped for a personal explanation for the renegacy of Plekhanov (who had been a military cadet in his youth), why is it hard to believe that he was unprepared for the renegacy of German and other Social Democrats whom he did not know as well, politically and personally, as he knew Plekhanov?

This does not detract at all from Lenin's great contributions in rearming the revolutionary vanguard after the betrayal in 1914. In fact, his contributions seem even greater when we know that he had to overcome important obstacles in order to be able to make them.

THANKS FOR STEWART ARTICLES

Thanks very much for printing the two articles by Larry Stewart in your Bulletin (No. 17 and No. 18). Even though he did not have all the answers and did not pretend to have all the answers, he threw a lot of light on the Black liberation struggle which I, for one, as an Afro-American supporter of the Socialist Workers Party, find informative and thought-provoking. Larry Stewart must have been quite a person and an excellent teacher; his death is a loss for all who want to learn as a prerequisite for changing society.

N.L.
Brooklyn, NY

[Larry Stewart's two articles have been reprinted as a pamphlet with the title "Permanent Revolution, Combined Revolution, and Black Liberation in the U.S." Readers are invited to submit articles or letters about the issues raised in this pamphlet.]

STEWART ARTICLES AND THE SWP

A rumor I have heard is that the SWP leadership is going to answer Larry Stewart's points at their upcoming convention in August. Anyhow, they have put Black liberation on the convention agenda, and what they will say about it will come from the Political Committee, instead of from the National Committee as is the usual custom. Do you know if there is really some connection between their forthcoming report and Stewart's articles? I think it would be a good sign if that was the case.

Ex-SWP member
Philadelphia, PA

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