

Information, Education, Discussion

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

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

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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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SUPPORT OCTOBER ANTI-APARTHEID DEMONSTRATIONS!

Events in South Africa have riveted the attention of the entire world for the past few months. In the United States, a massive movement in opposition to complicity by our government and by major corporations with the white-supremacist regime has grown to huge proportions. On October 11, a national day of protest in opposition to apartheid has been called, and demonstrations will occur in cities throughout the United States. Everyone who supports basic human rights should help to build and participate in these important actions.

* * *

South Africa has long stood as a reactionary bastion of racism and of support to the policies of the imperialist nations which dominate Africa, Asia, and Latin America. That is why the Reagan administration adamantly refused for a long time to take any action which might influence the government of that country to change its policies--despite his cynical rhetoric about human rights. And when he finally was compelled to adopt sanctions, they were the mildest he could muster.

Some sections of the U.S. ruling class, however, are afraid that failure to bring about reforms in South Africa might well result in a social revolution that would be far worse for U.S. imperialist interests than the relatively minor loss of the present regime as a reliable ally. This dilemma accounts for the present debate within ruling circles over South Africa.

And the fears of the American ruling class are well founded. The movement of the Black masses in South Africa is shaking the edifice of apartheid to its very foundations. Once again the courage and determination of the oppressed, in the face even of police bullets, show

that no government based solely on repression and terror is as invincible as it may appear in times of quiescence. No such government can stand for long against a determined movement of the masses.

* * *

The victims of apartheid are doing their share, but they need our help and support. The U.S. government and multinational corporations must be made to understand that the people of this country will not tolerate any complicity with the racist South African regime. We demand that every effort be made to guarantee the democratic rights of those South Africans who are now denied them. Black and other nonwhite nationalities in that country must finally be allowed the chance to freely determine their own future and their own form of government --a government which they believe will help guarantee a decent life.

A victory for this struggle will also help the fight against other reactionary governments that are dependent on U.S. support for their continued existence. The most immediate of these battles is taking place today in El Salvador. And of course the Nicaraguan workers and peasants are combating the attempt of the Reagan administration to reimpose a reactionary dictatorship through its war against the Sandinista revolution--not, so far, fought by U.S. troops, but planned and financed in Washington.

There can be no doubt that the links between these struggles will be made by the demonstrators on October 11. They will also be more than obvious to those who rule this country.

It is our responsibility to help bring out on that date the largest possible turnout against apartheid and against all who aid and abet it.

SWP CONVENTION REJECTS WORLD CONGRESS DEMAND FOR REINSTATEMENT OF EXPELLED MEMBERS

by Stuart Brown

In the September 13 issue of the Militant, a seemingly comprehensive, six-page report appears on the August 1985 SWP convention. Yet this report says nothing about what was probably the most important single decision made by the convention delegates. In a unanimous vote they chose to reject the decision of the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International, which had demanded that those who were expelled from the SWP during the 1982-1984 purge be readmitted to the party.

This vote by the convention delegates will play a big role in shaping the future of the SWP. It will affect both the kind of party the SWP is to become--one in which disagreement and dissent by the membership are increasingly inhibited--and the relations of the party with the Fourth International as a whole.

When the initial agenda was published in an SWP Information Bulletin last May it provided no room for a discussion of the world congress. In particular, there was no provision for discussing the decisions of that congress concerning the appeals from the U.S. Although there were two full meetings of the party National Committee between the time of the world congress and the time of the convention call, no action whatsoever had been taken by the party leadership on this matter--which increased the importance of action on it by the convention.

Then, at a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International held in June, a motion was adopted specifically asking the SWP convention to consider this issue. In response to that motion, the leadership of the SWP de-

cidated at the last minute (after the party's preconvention discussion had already ended) to place the matter on the agenda of the convention--in a session open to delegates only and closed to other party members and sympathizers.

The report and motions that were adopted by the convention specifically rejected carrying out the decision of the world congress on the appeals of the expelled members. The delegates also voted to continue the policy of excluding all members of the groups organized by the expelled--the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Socialist Action, and Socialist Unity--from any public meetings or premises of the SWP.

A contrary proposal was made by the fraternal delegate from the United Secretariat, who gave a report to the convention delegates in which he urged that steps be taken to comply with the world congress decisions. He emphasized the need to eliminate artificial barriers to the political discussion which is essential for the FI, and pointed to the purge carried out by the SWP as the biggest single obstacle to this process.

The decision by the convention delegates to reject this advice will deepen the already severe damage which the party has suffered as a result of the expulsions and the exclusion policy. The SWP has been reduced in size because of the purge and the accompanying reaction of additional layers who registered their protest by simply dropping out of the organization. The loss of members has continued to the present day, which was reflected in the significant decline in the number attending this year's convention compared to the one a year ago. The party has also been weakened in other ways, such as the decline in its participation in the mass movements, and a lessening of its ability to carry out basic propaganda efforts--sales of the press, election campaigns, etc.

The original appeals of those who were expelled were denied by the SWP convention in August 1984, a full year

This article is based on reports received by the Bulletin IDOM from people who attended the SWP convention. Despite our request to attend as observers, those who are known to be F.I.T. members or supporters were denied admission.

before the present convention. At that time the party leadership declared that the "case was closed," and that the party would not be troubled any more with what it cynically labeled "the splitters." That pronouncement proved to be premature. And the most recent decision will also not resolve the situation.

As long as the SWP maintains fraternal ties with the Fourth International, it will be unable to avoid the problem posed by the continued existence of other currents in this country which are part of the same world movement. The entire FI will correctly continue to demand that the largest component of its forces in this country, the one which initiated and must take responsibility for the split, i.e., the SWP, must also take steps which will allow the split to be healed and the unity of the movement restored.

OTHER CONVENTION MATTERS

The crisis in the party has also manifested itself in the small quantity of serious discussion on the vital issues facing the SWP and the U.S. class struggle today. This, too, can be traced directly to the mass purge. Not only were the political views of the expellees excluded from the discussion--views which attempted to defend the fundamental historical and programmatic traditions of the party--but other party members have been inhibited from raising their own disagreements, for fear they too will be slandered and branded as "splitters."

This was reflected, by all accounts, in the discussions on other items at the August convention this year. The reports on "Proletarian Military Policy and the Fight Against U.S. War Drive in Central America," by Mary-Alice Waters; "Road to Black Liberation," by Mac Warren; "The Socialist Workers Party and the Struggles of U.S. Farmers Today," by John Gaige; and "Building Union Fractions," by Joel Britton were generally uninspired, and didn't stimulate a great deal of debate or discussion from the assembled delegates. On the whole, the reporters simply reiterated ideas that had already been presented to the party in written form in reports and articles published before the convention in the SWP Information Bulletin. We have covered much of this material in previous issues of the Bulletin IDOM. The sole exception to this pattern was the report on the Black struggle for which there was no written

document. The party leadership's current thinking on this topic was revealed for the first time in the report to the convention itself.

EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

Connected with the convention this year was an educational conference, with classes open to all convention delegates and guests. Of particular interest to readers of the Bulletin IDOM was the series of three classes by Steve Clark on the subject of "Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution and the Fight Against the Second Wave of Menshevism."

"The second wave of Menshevism" is, of course, Stalinism -- which resulted from the degeneration of the Russian revolution, and against which Trotsky fought his last and most courageous struggle. But far from a tribute to this battle by Trotsky, Clark's class was a further codification and deepening of the SWP leadership's hostility to Trotsky and their counterposition of their own conception of Lenin's views to those of Trotsky.

In the discussion period after his first class, Clark acknowledged that he had personally changed his mind about the validity of permanent revolution in 1979 as a result of the Nicaraguan revolution. This statement is in stark contrast to the assurances given by the SWP Political Committee to party members who wondered during the preconvention discussion of 1981 whether any change in the leadership's thinking on this vital question might be under way. The party was assured at the time, in an article signed by Clark himself, that this was not the case.

Of course, it was the leadership's open abandonment of permanent revolution and other vital programmatic acquisitions--which began to be revealed only after the 1981 convention had ended and discussion in the party had been formally closed -- that created the crisis in the organization and led to the expulsions.

The central leaders of the party hid their real views from the membership while the discussion was open, and then claimed the right to implement formal norms prohibiting debate on disputed issues after the end of the convention. This can no longer be denied. It was the actions of the leadership itself which forced those who wanted to defend the program and traditions of the SWP into attempting to do so through extraordinary channels. Because of the efforts that were made along these lines,

the leadership accused loyal party members of indiscipline and expelled them from the organization.

This is a tragic commentary, both on the present state of the SWP and the cynicism and dishonesty of its current leaders. Clark can now openly acknowledge the process by which he and others secretly conspired to change the program

of the SWP, and at the same time the latest convention votes to continue implementing the destructive policies of expulsion, exclusion, and slander against those who simply tried to exercise their basic democratic rights, to defend their program, and to combat the secret maneuvers of the central leadership.

--September 10, 1985

THREE WAYS THE SWP WILL BENEFIT FROM COMPLYING WITH CONGRESS DECISION

by Chester Hofla

When the SWP's August convention voted not to comply with the Fourth International's decision that the party should reinstate the victims of the 1982-84 purge, the spokespersons of the SWP leadership used the following argument: Whatever the world congress said about reinstating the ex-members, we can't be expected to take them back into membership until we are convinced that doing so will be of benefit to the SWP. The convention's subsequent vote to reject motions adopted by the world congress was another way of saying there are no benefits for the SWP in complying. Actually there are at least three ways in which the SWP would benefit from reinstatement of the purged members.

1) One area that would be favorably affected by reinstatement of the expelled members would be the FI and the SWP's relations with it. Ninety-four percent of the delegates to the FI's world congress in February rejected the SWP leadership's defense of the expulsions, called them a purge which was instituted in "bare-faced violation of the statutes of the Fourth International," and demanded that the expelled members be reinstated with full rights.

These representatives of the overwhelming majority of our International did not agree with the SWP's political positions, but they were positively shocked by the purge. It was probably the major single factor contributing to the isolation of the SWP delegation at this congress--an isolation deeper than the SWP has ever before experienced in its 57-year relations with the FI.

The rest of the FI wants the SWP to comply with the congress decision and reunite all Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. inside of the SWP, its sympathizing section. If the SWP complies, the cloud over its head will undoubtedly dissipate. If it doesn't, its isolation -- its self-isolation -- will continue. This is a test for the SWP leaders, who declared at the start of the world congress that they recognized the legitimacy and authority of that body and its decisions.

They don't even have to retract anything or utter any apologies in order to take an act that would be hailed by virtually the entire International. All they have to do is say, "We obviously did not convince a majority of our world movement that the expulsions were necessary; in deference to their opinions, we will comply with the congress decision and leave it to time and further experience to show what course was correct." Nothing would do more to tap a huge reservoir of good will toward the SWP in the FI.

2) Reinstatement would have the immediate effect of strengthening the party numerically and politically. Party ranks might be increased by 20 or 25 percent, including members who resigned or were forced out but never stopped being revolutionaries. The slow and painful contraction of the SWP would come to a halt and the party probably would begin to grow again for the first time in several years.

The "siege" mentality which was introduced with the purge would be lifted, and with it would disappear the

distractions that have impeded the work that SWP and YSA members can and should be doing in the union, antiwar, women's, Black, Hispanic, and student movements. Some of the expelled members are veterans of party-building and the class struggle. Their return to the party ranks would strengthen the SWP internally and in its mass work and help to raise the political level of both. It also would raise the party's standing in the U.S. left generally, which was damaged by the purge. A stronger SWP, turning outward again, would certainly be more attractive to the Central American and Caribbean revolutionaries with whom the SWP wants to forge alliances.

3) Party morale, which is low today and has been since the purge, would definitely be improved. The members who are unhappy about the present state of the party would take reinstatement as a signal that the leadership still has the capacity to recognize and correct mistakes, and this in turn would encourage them to speak up in the party without fear that they might meet the same fate as the expelled members. Greater input from the rank and file would inevitably

stimulate greater participation in the party's campaigns by the entire membership.

Even the members who agree with the leadership on everything would feel relieved to be able to put the many disadvantages resulting from the purge behind them and to devote their energies to better ends. There would be a collective sigh of relief and, with this monkey off the party's back, a resurgence of confidence in the party's ability to advance.

THE PURGE CONTINUES

In preparation for this convention the New York Branch of the SWP held a trial of Keith M. in absentia and expelled him. Keith was the only party member in the country to present a counter platform to that of the party leadership before the SWP's pre-world congress convention in January 1985.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SWP'S 'EXCLUSION POLICY'

Q. The recent SWP national convention (August 1985) reaffirmed the party's "exclusion policy." What is that?

A. It is a policy of barring certain people from attending SWP election rallies or public forums or from entering and buying literature on sale in SWP bookstores.

Q. Why are they barred?

A. The SWP leaders say it is because these people commit a "provocation" against the SWP, endangering the security and legality of the party by "fraudulently" representing themselves to be members of the SWP.

Q. Is that true?

A. The facts are that no one who was expelled from the SWP or who was pressured to resign from the SWP in the last

three years has ever claimed to be a member of the SWP or to speak for the party which they used to belong to. The same is true about the groups that these ex-members have formed since they were expelled or resigned.

Q. How does the policy work? That is, how do the people running a public forum or bookstore in some city know the identity of the ones who are to be barred?

A. Early in 1984 the National Committee published a list of over 100 people who were labeled "splitters." Most of them appealed their expulsions and asked to be reinstated, but they were barred from public bookstores and public forums just the same. Later, branches extended the exclusion list to include local sympathizers of the SWP or YSA who said they thought the expelled people should be reinstated or who voiced distaste for the exclusion policy itself.

Q. Has the SWP ever had such a policy before 1984?

A. No, ex-members were never prevented from entering a public SWP bookstore to buy a pamphlet or from attending an SWP election rally open to the general public merely because of things they thought or said. The SWP reserved the right to keep out or eject actual disrupters, but before this it never shut its doors to people because of their views or alleged views.

Q. Are any members of the Communist Party or Democratic Socialists of America excluded from SWP forums and bookstores?

A. No.

Q. Are members of the Democratic Party or Republican Party excluded?

A. No.

Q. Do any other parties sympathetic with or affiliated to the Fourth International have such an exclusion policy?

A. No, and the world congress of the Fourth International last February condemned this policy and asked the SWP to discontinue it and reinstate the expelled.

Q. Doesn't the SWP realize that this policy and its enforcement give the party a cult-like aura in the eyes of revolutionary workers and students whom they are trying to recruit?

A. Either they don't realize it or they think it is a price worth paying if it succeeds in isolating the expelled and preventing normal relations between them and the present members.

--C.H.

READERS HELP WITH SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF WEISSMAN FUND

At the end of May the Fourth Internationalist Tendency launched a campaign to collect \$10,000 for a George Lavan Weissman Memorial Publications Fund. The purpose of the fund was to honor George, who had died in March, by helping to finance the continued publication of F.I.T. literature, including the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, which he co-founded and edited. It was a relatively large sum for a small group to collect.

But the friends and comrades of George and the Bulletin IDOM were generous, and when the fund campaign ended last week we had received \$9,547 plus a pledge of \$500 from the Minneapolis-St.

Paul Local Organizing Committee of the F.I.T. Knowing the pledgers, we view their pledge as the equivalent of money in the bank and are declaring the fund to be successfully completed, even if not all of it was received on time.

We thank the F.I.T. members, who contributed 53 percent of the total, and the non-members and Bulletin IDOM readers, who gave us the other 47 percent. We hope that we will merit your continued support, which we will need in the months ahead.

George Breitman
Fund Director
Sept. 10, 1985

IT'S TIME TO COME BACK AND FIGHT

An Appeal to Former Members of the SWP

by Tom Barrett

The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party claims that an overwhelming majority of its membership supports its current course. Formally, that is true. However, like many things that the SWP leadership says, it is a half-truth: it leaves out a great deal. Probably the most important thing it leaves out is that the majority of the party which approved the 1975 resolution "Prospects for Socialism in America" is no longer in the party. Comrades leave for different reasons, and, as Jim Cannon said, there are always two reasons for everything--a good reason and a real reason.

The SWP accumulated a great deal of political capital in the 1960s and first half of the 1970s: the Young Socialist Alliance actually doubled in size during the 1968-69 period, and after the disintegration of the Students for a Democratic Society it became the most powerful organization of radical youth in the United States. Hundreds of activists from the campuses, from the antiwar movement, from women's liberation and other areas joined the Trotskyist movement, were educated in revolutionary Marxism, and were developing into strong proletarian leaders. Most of them have been lost. The SWP had developed so much authority in the mass movement by the early 1970s that the Boston NAACP turned to it for leadership when school desegregation came under attack in that city in 1974. Nothing like that authority exists today. That political capital, on which no price tag could ever be placed, has been simply squandered. It didn't have to happen; indeed, there were a few lonely voices, including mine, raising questions, doubts, and then, later, warnings. But it did happen, and the party leadership has shown no sign of learning from its errors and returning to a party-building, rather than a party-destroying, course of action.

The most universal descriptive word I have heard used by former members for the party's policy right now is "suicidal." That assessment, which is more or less accurate, faces all of us who used

to belong to the party with a question: can the party be saved? That, in turn, poses the question, should the party be saved? Those are the questions we ask ourselves first, but they are not the questions which we really should address. What we should ask instead, is, should a revolutionary party be built, and how? When the question is posed in those terms it becomes clear to me that the answer is: yes, a revolutionary party must be built, and it must be built on the Marxist foundation that the SWP has developed over the past fifty-plus years. Whatever one's assessment of the SWP's chances of survival, however possible or impossible one sees reversing the party's suicidal course, the thing to be done now is to work for just that. That is why I decided to join the one organization which has made that its reason for existence -- the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

THE BALANCE-SHEET OF A DECADE

The party convention of August 1985 marks the tenth anniversary of "Prospects for Socialism in America," the resolution which stepped back and looked at the class struggle in broad historical terms, and called on the party to turn to the working class. There were clear danger signals for the party in both the pre-convention discussion and in the convention itself. I remember them well.

The Political Committee submitted the resolution as the "most important document the party has discussed since the American Theses of 1946." It took note of the end of the post-World War II boom and the first worldwide recession in over thirty years. It called attention to the loss of trust by broad sections of the American population in its government, especially in the wake of the Watergate scandal. It pointed to opportunities for the SWP to build the party by participating in the organized labor movement, opportunities which had not existed since the great strike wave

of 1946. The resolution did not explain what to do to take advantage of those opportunities, and it was understood that there were no magic formulas -- branches would have to get to assess the class struggle in their cities and use their Marxist-educated heads to figure out the best ways to build the party.

Little attention, however, was paid to the fundamental ideas of "Prospects for Socialism" in either the written preconvention discussion or in the discussion at the party convention itself. In the discussion under the Political Report not a single delegate addressed the actual resolution. Everyone wanted to reply to Comrade Milton Alvin, who had raised objections to the party's support for preferential treatment of minorities and women during layoffs, and to the abolition of advisory membership on the National Committee. I became concerned, though I kept my doubts to myself. Here was the most important resolution since 1946, and none of the delegates were addressing it. Could it be, I wondered, that the party ranks were not ready?

The 1975 convention called on the party to make a turn, towards the working class and the new opportunities for party-building there. The projections made in the Tasks and Perspectives Report were sensible: the establishment of new branches in a number of important industrial cities (I went to Newark to help carry out this decision), an opening up of direct recruitment to the SWP, capitalizing on new opportunities in the Black struggle, etc. Who could have predicted that it was only the first of several turns, each one called "The Turn," each one more destructive than the last?

By the 1976 convention the second turn was in full swing; the rubric was "community branches." It began with large, established branches dividing into two or more in different areas of their cities -- and in some cities it was not a bad idea. The three New York City branches had grown large and unwieldy, and the decision to establish branches in areas where we had not had branches for a long time -- such as Queens or the Bronx -- or where we had special opportunities -- such as the Lower East Side of Manhattan -- was based on party-building considerations. Other large branches -- Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago -- also divided. However, by the spring of 1976 things had changed. It was no longer large branches

dividing, but all branches dividing, and the consideration was not particular party-building tasks which would be aided by division, but "driving forward the turn." So, "Prospects for Socialism" was no longer considered "The Turn." Now, the turn was "community branches." The community branch turn lasted about a year. It had disastrous results for branch functioning and dealt the YSA a blow from which it has yet to recover.

Ask any SWP member when the turn was launched: the usual response will be the spring of 1978. In fact, by 1976 there had been two turns. By 1977 "Steel" was the word on everyone's lips, and not without reason, for the campaign of Ed Sadlowski for president of the United Steelworkers and the organization of "Steelworkers Fightback," a large rank and file movement, were exciting, important developments in the class struggle. The party was right to orient to it, and the party was right to encourage members who could do so to get jobs in steel plants and become active in the USWA. However, the party again went beyond considerations of party-building opportunities. Comrades were pressured into getting jobs in USWA plants regardless of the political opportunities. No thought was given to the relative importance of steel in each individual city; less thought was given to what political opportunities would continue to exist after the Sadlowski campaign was over. When that time came people were taken out of steel as quickly as they were put in.

At the time each turn was launched, wildly optimistic projections were made about how the party would grow, how it would become integrated into the political life of the working class and the oppressed minorities. When no immediate results were forthcoming, a mood of demoralization and cynicism began to grow and the party began to shrink. I was part of the early stage of this wave of resignations. In the fall of 1977 I met with the branch organizer and said, "I think the party is entering a crisis. Our work is not getting results, but we're not learning from it." The organizer dismissed my warnings with the assurance that the party leadership was making the necessary adjustments and that I was just feeling tired and demoralized. (It should be mentioned that the organizer I spoke with resigned from the party in late 1979.)

"Personal reasons." "The nature of the period." "Every group on the Left is

losing people." These are the excuses which have been given in the party. I became inactive in the spring of 1978 and resigned (with a push from the Newark organizer) in 1979 for "personal reasons." But in reality they were not "personal reasons" but political reasons -- for how could the party expect to recruit from the working class when it could not hold on to its own basic cadre, the comrades who were, in reality, the party's backbone? The SWP had moved from party-building to a course of action which I called at that time "suicidal."

The demoralization felt by the party leadership over the results of four years of the turn had its inevitable impact on the political program when the leadership was unable to face the fact that its assessment of the post-1975 period and what to do about it had been fundamentally in error. Instead, it concluded that the Trotskyist program itself was in error and began systematically to drop it. There is a need to defend this program to which hundreds of revolutionary activists were recruited. The Bulletin in Defense of Marxism exists for that very reason.

THE REFORM OF THE SWP: THE F.I.T.

Reagan's invasion of Grenada in 1983 convinced me to return to political activity; I turned first to the SWP. I thought if anything was being done the SWP would be doing it.

I contacted the party in October; I heard nothing again until March 1984, when I received an invitation to a meeting of "Active Supporters" in Jersey City. The meeting was to discuss the 1984 presidential campaign and the recent "split," resulting in the formation of Socialist Action. I attended that meeting in the hope that the party had learned from its mistakes and was returning to a party-building policy. I was soon to be disappointed.

In my first discussion with party representatives I was given thoroughly false information on the "split"; I was not informed that the SWP leadership had openly rejected the theory of permanent revolution and that the minority had not left the party voluntarily but had been expelled. I was told that the "split" had nothing to do with disagreements on how to orient to the working class, that George Breitman called for "political revolution in Cuba," that the minority "counterposed Poland to Central Ameri-

ca," that the opposition had split along geographical and personality lines.

My initial response was to give the reporters the benefit of the doubt and to accept their assertions. However, though I expressed basic agreement with the party majority against what I had been told were the positions of the opposition, I expressed the opinion that the "split" was politically unjustified and that steps should be taken immediately to reunify the party. I also did the one thing that should be a reflex action for any Leninist -- I contacted the opposition to get its side of the story.

While I was reading the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism for the first time I had something of an idea how Jim Cannon must have felt reading Trotsky's "Draft Criticism" in Moscow in 1928. Yes, the party crisis was real -- it had nothing to do with "personal problems" on my part or the part of the hundreds of other people who had left the party. The F.I.T. was saying what I had been saying in 1977 and 1978.

But a nagging question remained, what to do about it? The F.I.T. had answers all right, something I had never been able to come up with in the previous seven-plus years, but were the F.I.T.'s answers the right ones? There was obviously some disagreement, for the opposition had itself split on this question. Socialist Action set out to build an organization parallel to the SWP; the F.I.T. chose to focus its attention on reforming the SWP. Having years of experience with the party leadership and how it subtly yet effectively stifled free thought within the ranks, I was skeptical that the F.I.T. could accomplish much by orienting to the SWP membership.

It was Larry Stewart who explained to me what the F.I.T.'s orientation to the SWP meant. Stewart argued that even if the F.I.T. were unable to win one person from the SWP it was a matter of principle to fight for the SWP's reform. The revolutionary Marxist heritage of the SWP is our heritage, and we will not give up on the party without a struggle. The ranks of the SWP still are the vanguard of the working class, and there is no hope for reaching the working masses by going around the most advanced. Furthermore, he said, if we had to build a new party we could not do it without the programmatic foundation of this ideological battle. Stewart's arguments ultimately convinced me to join the F.I.T.

A TIME TO TAKE STOCK — AND TO TAKE ACTION

It is perfectly understandable that an embittered former SWP member will have doubts about her or his entire political life. Was the degeneration of the SWP inevitable? Does Stalinism necessarily flow from Leninism? Is Trotskyism hopelessly sectarian? Is socialist revolution possible? I have asked myself all these questions and more, and some questions remain unanswered. It is entirely natural that the sorting-out process take some time and that some individuals need more time than others. I needed several years.

One conclusion to which I have come is that my years in the SWP were valuable ones. I received a political education -- both from books and from life -- which no other organization could give, and that organization accomplished a great deal in those years. Those achievements -- the SWP's role in helping the Vietnamese defeat U.S. imperialism, in clarifying the experience of the youth radicalization, in helping to win reproductive rights for women and in exposing the FBI, CIA and other government agencies as the repressive instru-

ments they are -- can never be taken away from the party. I am proud to have been an SWP member during those years.

The F.I.T. stands on the foundation of the SWP, and its mission is to return the SWP to the party-building orientation it once had. Today more opportunities for building the revolutionary party exist than at any time in the past five years. The Black masses of South Africa are rising to what may be the final confrontation with white supremacist rule. U.S. imperialism is threatening war against the Nicaraguan revolution. Industrial workers are not sharing in the Reagan "recovery." And yet the SWP continues to isolate itself. The F.I.T. has taken on a dual task -- or rather, a single task with two aspects: we are fighting to return the SWP to revolutionary Marxism, through patient explanation, in publications, in international debates, and we are intervening in the class struggle, attempting to show in action what the Trotskyist program means. This single task is building the revolutionary party. To the hundreds of former party members who still believe in socialist revolution I make this appeal: fight for the program to which you were recruited! Join the F.I.T.!

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

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THE ROLE OF PROGRAM IN CONSTRUCTING A PARTY IN THE U.S. TODAY

A Response to Les Evans

by Steve Bloom

In the premier issue of the magazine Socialist Unity (August-September, 1985), which is published by the newly formed organization of the same name, an article appears by Les Evans titled, "The case for a socialist alternative." Evans is one of the main national spokespersons for Socialist Unity, and was for many years a leader of the Socialist Workers Party. Like many others, he was expelled from the SWP during the political purge carried out by the Barnes leadership beginning in late 1982. In late 1983 and early 1984 two groups of expelled members were formed, Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

Until the formation of S.U. in June 1985, Evans and the others who founded it were part of Socialist Action. Within S.A. they constituted a minority which, among other issues, advocated a course toward fusion with two other groups on the U.S. left--Workers Power and International Socialists. This was one of the factors which led to an extreme internal crisis in S.A., culminating in a split and the founding of S.U. by the minority current.

The article by Evans is primarily aimed at explaining and justifying S.U.'s regroupment policy: "While we do not think past experience or Marxist theory should be taken lightly, we also have drawn some conclusions from the process of party-building in Nicaragua and El Salvador. There, the leading revolutionary parties actually are, or originated from, multitendency fronts. They demanded agreement only on a minimal number of pressing current questions, the most compelling real issues, whether these concerned immediate reforms or more fundamental revolutionary policy."

Evans believes that this basic approach should be applied by revolutionists in the United States today. He explains, "As a starting point for a discussion of the possibility of unification of existing groups, we suggest that there must be some basic agreement on conducting close common work. In our

opinion, the central priorities at this moment should be the construction of a mass antiwar movement to oppose U.S. intervention in Central America; and the defense of the unions against the union-busting offensive of the companies and the Reagan administration. Other central planks should be an uncompromising defense of Blacks and Hispanics; support to feminism; opposition to U.S. and Israeli attacks on the Arab and Palestinian peoples; and solidarity with the struggle of South African Blacks to overthrow the apartheid regime. The place not to begin is insistence, for example, on agreement on the class nature of the Soviet state" (emphasis in original).

Evans puts one qualification on his proposed basis for unification: "We want to participate in the process of building an organization ... that does not believe it is possible, much less desirable, to achieve those objectives through participation in the Democratic Party."

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

On its face, the analysis presented by Evans seems completely inadequate if his objective is to convince other revolutionists in this country about the course being followed by S.U. What is needed for that is a discussion that will come to terms with the problems posed by this regroupment perspective. But Evans himself is apparently oblivious to any such problems, and completely fails to take them up.

Evans's list of "priorities" for the work of a united organization are all certainly valid and important tasks in the American class struggle. But they are so general that, except for his limitation about the Democratic Party, virtually every group on the left could subscribe to them. Because of that they fail to define anything at all. This sort of thing has been tried before, and with little success.

In fact, Evans's rejection of the vital task of building a party based on

a program, and substituting for it a broad list of causes around which to be active, is precisely the course initiated recently by another ex-SWP leader, Pedro Camejo. Camejo founded the North Star Network on precisely this basis. Though there are two fundamental differences between Evans and Camejo that we can detect--Camejo supports work in the Democratic Party and completely rejects the Fourth International--there would seem to be much that unites them in their overall method.

More fundamental, however, is another difficulty. Evans presents as a model to be followed in the United States the experience of the FSLN and FMLN, and also of sections of the Fourth International--in particular the Mexican PRT, which, he explains, was created when "three groups united to form the Revolutionary Workers Party. The PRT, in turn, sought out other Left organizations. Together they held regular joint meetings to plan work in particular areas where there was agreement, to run joint election campaigns, to coordinate with 'rival' groups work among teachers, peasants, and students. In the last presidential elections the PRT won 500,000 votes and held election rallies of 50,000 in Mexico City. It has more than 1,500 members and many times that number of close sympathizers." Evans concludes, "Observing this experience we became convinced that this was a more intelligent way to proceed in the United States than to set up shop as the Bolsheviks."

But what about the obvious difference between the United States today and the examples which Evans cites? In Nicaragua and El Salvador in particular, what provided the basis for different groups and factions joining in a common vanguard organization was the development of a mass revolutionary upsurge. In Mexico, too, it was not primarily the willingness of Fourth Internationalists to "[seek] out other Left organizations" which set the stage for the PRT's rapid growth in size and influence--though of course that was important. The primary factor was the radicalization of the masses; fueled in large part by the revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

In general, fusions and regroupments are far more likely to be successful in a period of mass radicalization or of revolutionary upheaval than in periods of stagnation or downturn of the mass movement. All of the main examples

of successful fusions in the history of the revolutionary movement which have actually taken place along the lines that Evans describes fall into this category. One such is the fusion in the United States of the Musteite American Workers Party with the Communist League of America during the working class upsurge of the 1930s. The fusion of the Trotskyist forces and the left Social Revolutionaries with the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917 is another, as is the creation of the Cuban Communist Party out of the July 26 Movement and other forces during the course of the Cuban revolution.

Evans can certainly not argue that conditions in the United States today are conducive to this sort of process. But if that is true, then the specific examples he cites as a model for the regroupment he proposes are simply not relevant. This does not mean that it is impossible to have a fusion or regroupment on some other basis at the present time in this country, but it must be motivated on some grounds other than the suprahistorical generalities about non-sectarianism presented by Evans.

A fusion might certainly take place as a result of a genuine programmatic convergence of two distinct tendencies. Another possibility is the conscious subordination of programmatic differences between a smaller organization in a process of joining with a larger one--with the idea of clarifying disputed questions through future discussion based on common work and experience. (An example of this kind of fusion is the process by which the Revolutionary Marxist Committee--a state capitalist grouping--joined the SWP in the late 1970s. Ultimately most of the RMCers were won over to the workers' state analysis by the party majority.)

Neither of these possibilities, however, cover the process proposed by Evans. He specifically denies that there is a programmatic convergence, insisting instead that questions of program are not fundamental; and at the present time the relative size and weight of S.U., I.S. and W.P.--which are essentially equivalent from a numerical point of view--does not favor a successful evolution of the situation after the formation of a common group.

PROGRAM AND PARTY-BUILDING

The key question that Evans and S.U. must answer is what their attitude is toward the question of program within

the process of party-building in the United States today. We must stress again that in this country we are not in a period of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses for power, or even of mass radicalization and fight-back by the American working class. We are in a period when the tasks of the revolutionary party are those of propaganda, of patiently explaining our ideas on most questions (with the exception of opposition to U.S. policies in Central America and South Africa where agitational efforts can be effective), and of accumulating and educating a cadre around the basic program of revolutionary Marxism.

That preparation and education of a vanguard is an absolutely essential task on which the future of the American revolution depends. It can only be accomplished if we maintain a serious attitude toward the theoretical conquests of our movement; and it cannot be short-circuited by attempts to find some "broader" basis for "unity of the vanguard" by avoiding programmatic disagreements.

Evans nods his head in the direction of maintaining programmatic integrity, but the entire thrust of his proposals looks in the opposite direction. This, in fact, is a crucial question that S.U. ought to face squarely--even in the interests of pursuing its own project of regroupment. It is certainly possible to lay aside some theoretical questions (Evans says "the place not to begin is insistence, for example, on agreement on the class nature of the Soviet state") if there is sufficient agreement in other areas. But this cannot be done in such a way as to belittle or underestimate the importance of the questions temporarily laid aside.

There can be no doubt that agreement on the class nature of the Soviet state is an issue with which any fused organization in this country will have to come to terms. Not only is it an important theoretical question in its own right, but it is crucial for a long-term correct orientation toward real events in the international class struggle, such as the upsurge of the Polish working class. (Even more crucial for the future of S.U.'s project is the related question of the class nature of the Cuban state--on which the present position of S.U. is also in disagreement with I.S. and W.P.)

We would feel a little less dubious about the future of those Fourth Internationalists in this country who are

proposing a fusion perspective if they clearly explained and emphasized this aspect of the programmatic problem instead of simply dismissing it in an offhand way.

STRUGGLE WITH THE SWP

There is another side to the question of program which Evans completely ignores with his proposals on regroupment. Socialist Unity, like Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, is the product of the struggle which took place inside the Socialist Workers Party. It is precisely because we considered the question of the historical program of the SWP and the Fourth International to be of crucial importance that we undertook that fight against the Barnes leadership of the party which was trying to undermine it.

The crisis that has gripped the SWP remains in its essence a crisis of programmatic perspective. The party leadership lost confidence in its program and began floundering around, searching for something new, something different, something more effective. The result has been the drastic decline of the SWP in terms of size, influence, stability, or any other measure of the health of a revolutionary party in the United States today.

The way to respond to the crisis of the SWP, which remains the task of the expelled opposition, is not to begin raising our own question marks over the program and theory of our movement, and certainly not through trying to find some alternative shortcut around the programmatic problems. Rather it is to take on the vital political issues and show how a revolutionary Marxist analysis, along with the practical application of that analysis in the class struggle, can provide the answers that the working class and its allies require to move forward today.

It is a striking characteristic of the Evans article that he is little concerned with the problems of the struggle with the SWP. For him, this is completely overshadowed by the regroupment with I.S. and Workers Power.

There is another important aspect to this which concerns the SWP as well. The 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International voted overwhelmingly that the proper solution to the organizational situation in the United States, where a significant number of Fourth Internationalists are organized outside of the

party that would be recognized as a section of the FI in this country were it not for reactionary legislation, is for the SWP to readmit all of the expelled with full democratic rights. Now one group of those expelled members proposes to proceed in a fusion with groups that cannot be accepted as part of the process proposed by the world congress--groups which are even actively opposed to the Fourth International today. This will make it qualitatively more difficult for our world movement to continue insisting that the SWP carry out the mandate of the world congress delegates and readmit all the expelled members.

WHO IS THE VANGUARD?

Evans makes a major point of insisting that revolutionists in the U.S. today must break with what he considers the tradition of small groups, arrogantly proclaiming themselves to be "the vanguard" of the American working class. He explains what he sees as one of the common errors of left parties in the 1960s--the "insistence of each that it was the only true representative of Marxism on American shores." He informs us that "those who have now formed Socialist Unity claim no special mandate as the vanguard party" (emphasis in original). He opposes "set[ting] up shop as the Bolsheviks," and rejects the idea that any one organization has "THE PROGRAM."

Given the stress that Evans puts on this idea, he seems to believe that he has discovered a basic truth about the problems of the American left for at least the last 20 or 30 years. But Evans's view of this problem is completely one-sided.

It is the class struggle itself which is the primary factor in the success or failure of the revolutionary Marxist movement to grow and become a significant force in the United States. This is not determined by the attitude, tone, or approach of the revolutionary Marxist current--though these factors can mediate the speed, extent, and even the ultimate result of the development of the vanguard. The main reason for the relative weakness of the revolutionary Marxist current in this country cannot legitimately be traced to some alleged sectarian tendency in our history--though there is nothing wrong per se in looking critically at our past. The basic reason for our weakness at the

present time is that it reflects the weakness of the working class movement in this country as a whole.

Of course it is true that anyone who mistakes arrogance for Bolshevism is no Bolshevik. And there can be no doubt that those who believe they have the true revealed program gleaned from a set of divine texts have more in common with religious mysticism than revolutionary Marxism. The program of our movement is not and can never be some finished and immutable object. Even the best, most conscious of revolutionaries--or even better, especially these--must learn all they can from the experiences of the class struggle and of other currents. Lenin borrowed the entire agrarian program of the Bolsheviks in 1917 from the Social Revolutionaries, and he didn't hesitate to reconsider his approach to the class nature of the Russian revolution as he saw it actually unfold before his eyes. Especially today, we must all be aware of the important role of the Nicaraguan revolution in deepening and enriching our appreciation of the process of permanent revolution.

But understanding this is only to understand half the problem of program. Because it is also absolutely impermissible to equivocate on vital programmatic issues or to take them lightly. Sacrificing or questioning programmatic concepts simply in the interest of avoiding sectarianism poses the likelihood of replacing sectarianism with its opposite--opportunism.

The program of the revolutionary Marxist movement today is not "THE PROGRAM." It is rather the best approximation of the program which we, as mortal human beings, have been able to come up with on the basis of an overall synthesis of the entire experience of the revolutionary working class and its allies. The lessons contained in our program were learned at a great cost in human sacrifice and suffering. It is certainly possible to discover that parts of it are imprecise, out of date, or even incorrect. We discover these things on the basis of concrete experiences in trying to apply our program in the real world.

But whenever we do decide that something in our program must be questioned, altered, or changed, we do so on the basis of struggle--a struggle between preconceptions we may hold and the reality of the world in which we try to apply them. We never change our programmatic concepts lightly--without some

sound and very convincing evidence that the changes will make us better able to deal with the problems of overthrowing capitalism on a world scale. And we never change or question our programmatic convictions simply because they get in the way of "unity" with others.

Real revolutionists are correctly devoted to the program which they have struggled so hard to derive from reality and to defend. That quality too, along

with the flexibility to look reality in the face in order to acknowledge when some invalid preconception must be discarded, is part of a Leninist approach. A Fourth Internationalist grouping which enters a process of fusion without understanding this, simply raising doubts about its own identity, its past, and its program, is unlikely to advance the process of building a revolutionary Marxist party in this country or on a world scale.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS FROM THE F.I.T.

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An Answer to Jack Barnes

by Cliff Conner **60¢**

Write: F.I.T.

P.O. Box 1947

New York, N.Y. 10009

JAMES KUTCHER AT HIS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Interview with an SWP Founding Member

Bulletin IDOM: The United Auto Workers celebrated their fiftieth anniversary last month and according to the records you joined the radical movement in October 1935. So your fiftieth anniversary will take place in a few weeks. Would you care to comment for our readers on how you came to join and how you feel about being an activist for such a long time?

James Kutcher: Why I joined is told in The Case of the Legless Veteran. Basically it was the same reason why so many others became radicalized in the 1930s--disillusion with the economic system that was unable to provide us with jobs, and the prospects of war and fascism which were becoming more threatening all around the world.

I joined the Young People's Socialist League in Newark while I was a student at Essex County Junior College. This was the youth affiliate of the Socialist Party, which was led by Norman Thomas at that time, but the youth were moving to the left, and two years later they broke with the Second International and endorsed the movement for a Fourth International.

These are excerpts from a September 1985 interview with James Kutcher, a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International. In 1948 he was purged from his clerical job with the Veterans Administration in Newark because of his SWP membership, and in the next decade became the best-known SWP member in this country during a long and ultimately successful campaign against the witch hunters for reinstatement in his job. Details about this fight are in his book The Case of the Legless Veteran (Pathfinder Press, 1973). He was expelled from the SWP in October 1983; his appeal for readmission was printed in the Bulletin IDOM, No. 10, August 1984. He has been hospitalized in New York since January 1984.

In those days the choice facing young rebels was between the YPSL or the youth organization of the Communist Party. One of the things that led me to the YPSL was a pact that Stalin signed with the French imperialist government that summer, and the support that the Stalinists there and here began to show for the democratic imperialists.

I was very antiwar. I remember that fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia a week before I joined the YPSL. For a whole year the Ethiopian government had been pleading unsuccessfully with the imperialist democracies to prevent this war.

Another factor was my father's membership in the fur workers union, a left-wing part of the needle trades industry, as it then was called. My father did not belong to any party but he taught me that working people have to organize and rely on themselves. The CIO was organized as a committee inside the AFL less than a month after I joined the YPSL, but I did not know the significance of it then.

Bulletin: What did you think about the future then? Did you expect the next 50 years to turn out the way they have?

Kutcher: I can't remember everything from that time as clearly as I would like. I probably expected that we would achieve socialism on a world scale in less than 50 years, if I thought about it at all.

You must understand that, like most new members, I was not very well educated in socialist theories or strategies. I hated exploitation and oppression, militarism and discrimination, and wanted to help eliminate them. But I didn't know much about the history of the revolutionary movement, or about economics, principles and tactics, and so on. It would be foolish for me to pretend that I am an authority on all these questions even now.

But I was lucky to come into contact with a group of young Trotskyists, who joined the YPSL not long after I did, and they helped me to acquire at least the rudiments of a Marxist education. If not for that, I might have dropped out as so many YPSL members began to do with the approach of World War II. Some of them even became anti-socialist.

So I put a lot of stock in socialist education. I was mainly an activist myself, but activism must go hand in hand with solid education if you want to build cadres that will last for the long haul. Anyhow, that's how I came into contact with Trotskyism, and why I joined them when they were expelled from the Socialist Party in 1937 and proceeded to organize the SWP.

Bulletin: Can you compare the SWP of 1938 with the SWP of today, or of 1983, before you were expelled?

Kutcher: That is a big subject to tackle off the cuff, without thinking it over first. It's like asking me to compare myself as I was in 1938, when I was 25, with what I have become today. I was the same person all that time, but I was also changing and growing, learning and relearning, and so on. The SWP is also a living and developing body, with all of its advances and setbacks over such a long time, and I really can't answer such questions about it in a few words.

But I guess I have a few opinions about it. In many ways the SWP is stronger than it was at the beginning (or it was until two years ago; I can't vouch for what has happened since then). For example, it has a larger professional staff and as a result is better organized than it used to be in the early days. We should never underestimate the importance of a staff for a revolutionary party. That is one of the things we learned from Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Recently I reread a part of the book The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party, [Monad Press, 1982]. It reprints convention and National Committee documents--resolutions and minutes--of the first year and a half of the SWP--1938-39. You can't read it without being struck by what an able leadership the SWP had at that time. Not that they were infallible, but they knew what they were doing, they had clear perspectives and presented them openly for everyone to judge, and they seemed to be very self-confident.

I am not trying to imply that the present SWP leadership--or the one while

I was a member -- is not able. In some ways they are or were just as capable as the party founders. But they don't seem to be as consistent and self-confident as James P. Cannon and the others, or to have the same confidence for the intelligence of the membership.

Another thing I think about the 1930s and 1940s is that the membership was more self-reliant than the members of recent years. They didn't need constant supervision and advice from the national office about every little thing they did. So maybe they made a few more mistakes that way. But they also learned from their mistakes and were able to develop a greater sense of initiative, which is certainly an asset for revolutionists.

Probably I should have stuck with my first reaction and passed up this subject altogether. It is too complex to be treated briefly or in passing.

Bulletin: Do you want to say anything about your expulsion from the SWP after 48 years in the movement?

Kutcher: No, it's a painful subject, and I said what I thought in my appeal for reinstatement, which you printed in your bulletin last year. But I do have something to say about the reinstatement question.

In my view, the SWP is the only revolutionary party in this country, whatever mistakes it has made. That was why I didn't want to be kicked out of it and that is why I want to be readmitted. I don't know if that will happen in my lifetime, since I hear the SWP convention last month turned our appeals down again. But I am sure that as long as the SWP remains a revolutionary party, the question of reinstating loyal revolutionists will come up again and again. Both the leaders and the members of the SWP are intelligent people. Sooner or later they will recognize that readmitting us is in the best interests of the party.

Meanwhile, I am grateful to the Fourth International and most of its delegates at the world congress last winter for supporting our appeal and calling on the SWP to restore us to membership with full rights. Their action has helped to keep our case alive against people who want to see it buried and forgotten. I am counting on them to continue along these lines until all Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. are united inside the SWP. Victory in this effort will strengthen the FI as well as the SWP.

FROM THE ARSENAL OF MARXISM

WHY WHITE WORKERS SHOULD SUPPORT BLACK STRUGGLE

by Frank Lovell

I am glad to accept the Socialist Workers Party nomination for governor of Michigan because the Socialist Workers Party platform has the answers to the crucial problems facing this country. Our aim in this campaign is to tell the truth about these problems, whether the truth is popular or not, whether it will win us votes or lose us votes. Because only when the people learn the truth and act on the truth will we be able to solve these problems. I intend to take up the main issues one by one, starting tonight, here and everywhere else I can get anyone to listen. The most urgent issue, and the one I shall discuss first, is the current Negro struggle.

I hope that many of the people listening over this radio station tonight are Negroes, and that they will let me know what they think about what I say. But they are not the main audience I am trying to reach tonight. Instead, I am trying through this talk to reach the ears and the minds of white people, especially white workers. I hope I can help them understand the Negro struggle and show them why they should support it in every way possible

What Negroes Want

What is it Negroes are asking, what is it they want? A decent job, a decent home, decent schools for their children, a voice in government, freedom from insult and humiliation, a life with some dignity — all reasonable demands. These are the same things white

workers want. And Negroes want them now — not next year, or ten years from now — just as white workers would demand them now if we lived in a country where we were denied equal opportunity merely because of the color of our skin.

When the Negro people ask for equality and freedom, and demonstrate and fight for them, the newspapers and TV commentators complain that Negroes are "too impatient," are asking "too much, too fast." They want us to forget that Negroes were supposed to have gotten freedom and equality a hundred years ago, according to the Constitution. A hundred years! Instead, they got promises, promises broken, promises cynically betrayed by both the Republican and Democratic parties, promises about progress by-and-by, a time that never seems to come. The only reason Congress is considering a mild civil-rights bill today, the only reason, is because Negroes have stopped being so patient and started demonstrating and fighting.

Too impatient? No, if Negroes are to be criticized on this point, it would be for the opposite reason. I often ask white workers, would you be patient when patience means a continuation of second-class citizenship? When patience means you will be the last hired and the first fired? When patience means you cannot rent or buy a house of your choice that you have money to pay for? When patience means that your children, who have only one child-

hood, will continue to get an inferior education, so that they will not be able to compete equally when they get out of school, no matter how many civil-rights laws may be passed later on, after their childhood is gone?

Would you be willing to sit and wait under such conditions? Wouldn't you say, as Negroes are saying, "No, a hundred years is long enough," and start fighting, fighting hard, to achieve the equality that is supposed to be a hallmark of democracy?

Another charge used to smear the Negro freedom fighters is that they are guilty of "extremism." This is a perversion of words. On one side are the people who have been violating the constitutional rights of the Negroes for a century and want to keep on violating them. On the other side are the people, black and white, but mostly black so far, who want to stop these violations and compel a reluctant government to enforce these constitutional rights. And the big business newspapers and many liberals want us to think that both sides are on the same level — the oppressors and the oppressed; that both sides are equally guilty of "extremism" — the racists and their victims, who only want to get the racists off their backs.

In the scales of this hypocritical logic, anybody who is strongly and passionately against oppression, anybody who is determined to end oppression at all costs, is an "extremist." George Washington's army in 1776 — they were "extremists." The people who fought the self-appointed aristocrats for universal suffrage, the right of everybody to vote — they were "extremists." The men and women who battled to introduce free public education — they were "extremists." And those of us, our brothers and fathers who went out on strike, and battled the scabs and cops to unionize auto and steel and the other mass industries 25-30 years ago, and weren't at all moderate about it — we were "extremists" too.

Setting Example

But without such "extremism," unwillingness to be moderate, re-

This is the text of a speech on May 4, 1964, by Frank Lovell, then an auto worker in Detroit and Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Michigan. It was delivered over radio station WQRS-FM in Detroit during the 1964 election campaign at a time when the civil rights movement against the Jim Crow segregationist system was reaching its crest. Some of the language common in the civil rights and radical movements of that period ("Negro," etc.) is now outdated, but the essential points in the speech remain completely valid 21 years later. It is reprinted from the May 11, 1964, *Militant*, where it had the title "An Appeal to White Workers: Support the Negro Struggle for Equality."

fusal to compromise with injustice, and determination to use any methods possible to eliminate abuses and inequities, we wouldn't have had an independent country in the first place; and it wouldn't be worth living in the second place. If that is extremism, then I say we need more of it. And I feel grateful to the Negro people for setting an example that should be followed by white workers whenever and wherever we are confronted by injustice.

A third complaint against "impatient" and "extremist" Negroes is that they are inviting violence or advocating violence. This is another lie, a tricky way of putting the blame on Negroes when their enemies resort to violence. The truth is that Negroes have been remarkably non-violent up to now, considering the way they are treated.

I do not see any virtue in turning the other cheek when your head is being broken. The founding fathers did not advocate or practice pacifism when they fought to establish the United States in 1776. You white workers don't turn your other cheek when strikebreakers try to break up your picket lines and smash your unions and deprive you of the benefits of unionism. Why is violence rarely mentioned or merely deplored when it is systematically used for a hundred years to keep the Negro in his so-called place, and then becomes so horrible when the Negro employs self-defense against racist force and terror?

Malcolm X is 100 per cent right when he says that Negroes should organize to defend themselves in those areas where the government fails to protect them against violence. I repeat, in those areas where illegal violence is being used against Negroes and the government does not protect them. Why should anyone get upset about that — except the racists who intend to keep on attacking the Negroes and don't want them organized and prepared to resist?

Self-defense is an American tradition, one of our glorious traditions. Why is it a virtue of which we boast for white people to continue this tradition, but not black people? What is behind all the lying propaganda about "Negro violence" except a desire to isolate the Negroes and make it easier for their oppressors to keep them down? Those of us who would defend ourselves against unjustified violence are duty-bound to

defend the right of others to do the same.

Moral Reason

There are two basic reasons why white workers should actively support the Negro struggle for equality. One may be called a moral reason, the other a material reason. I shall talk about them in that order.

The Negro struggle is just. If you believe in democracy, then you cannot deny your black brothers and sisters an equal share in its benefits. If you deny them equal treatment, you have no right to talk about democracy. It is a mockery of the Constitution to support a racist division of the country into people who have certain inalienable rights and other people who don't.

Torn from his African homeland and shackled to toil in the fields, the Negro has earned the rights of full citizenship a hundred times over. He has earned it with his sweat — two and a half centuries of unpaid labor, followed by another century of underpaid labor; and with his blood — in the American Revolution where he fought to make this country independent and in the Civil War where he fought to make it free as well as independent. No cause in the long history of mankind is more just than that of the Negro. Those who oppose it, those who turn their backs on it, those who wash their hands of it, are no better, morally, than those who failed to oppose racist and religious oppression in Nazi Germany.

The other reason why white workers should support the Negro struggle may be more compelling. It is simply this — that racism and discrimination and segregation are harmful to white workers too, not as harmful as to the Negroes of course, but harmful just the same. Therefore white workers should oppose racism in their own self-interest.

I know very well that white workers can and do benefit from discrimination. When five people are competing for a job, or a promotion, or anything else, and when one of the five is a Negro, and he is discriminated against and pushed to the back of the line because of his color, then the other four, the whites, stand a better chance of getting the job or promotion, and in this sense certainly benefit from his exclusion.

But my point is that while racism benefits white workers in

some ways, it also hurts them in other ways. I will try to show how the damage outweighs the benefits.

Anti-Negro discrimination was originated by the employers, the capitalists, for two reasons: because it is economically profitable for them, and because it is politically useful for them as a way to divide and rule.

It is economically profitable because the black worker, who is singled out as "inferior" and then degraded, can be forced to work for lower wages. It is politically useful for the employers because it keeps the workers divided along color lines and fighting each other, instead of uniting to fight their common enemy and exploiter, the employers.

What benefits does the white worker derive from this? The existence of racial discrimination enables the employers to hold down the wages of all, both white and black. A look at the South proves this because that is the region where unions are fewest and weakest, and where wages are lowest in the nation, thanks to the Jim Crow system. So the white Southern worker has an advantage over the discriminated-against Negro worker, but he has to pay a high price for this advantage — conditions that keep him in poverty too. And he will be kept there until he learns he must unite with the black worker against the employers and the employers' politicians and force them to change conditions so that white and black workers will both have jobs with decent pay.

Here's another way white workers pay heavily for the racist system: If you are a white worker, you probably want Congress to pass Medicare, or provide better and earlier pensions, or raise the minimum wage, or repeal anti-union laws. But one of the main reasons you haven't been able to get these things is because anti-labor politicians from the South control Congress and block such legislation. And the main reason they control Congress is because Southern Negroes are fraudulently and forcibly denied the right to vote, with the consent of the big-business politicians from the North.

Bias Hurts Workers

I think I have proved my point about discrimination hurting white workers too. It will be a great day for all workers when we can get together and win political power

away from the employers and their two parties. Then, instead of fighting among ourselves over jobs that are too few to go around, we will be able to reorganize the economy to provide well-paid jobs, decent housing and an abundance of the other things all of us need to live and grow as human beings. But that won't happen as long as the employers can keep us divided, competing against each other, each seeking some advantage at the expense of others — white against black, employed against unemployed, men against women, skilled against unskilled, white-collar against blue-collar, old against young.

I want to cite one more example of self-interest dictating that white workers should help their Negro brothers. Whites are a majority in this country, but a minority in the world. And the world is changing. The days are gone when the non-white three-quarters of the human family will let itself be dominated and pushed around by a white minority. They are putting an end to foreign white rule and exploitation, and beginning to take their rightful place in the world.

What white-dominated countries

like the United States and South Africa do about race relations today will affect race relations throughout the world in the future, the near future, when the non-white majority will have the biggest say. What white Americans do about the rights of black Americans will surely affect what the non-white majority of the world does about the rights of white Americans. If white Americans continue to deny equality to black Americans today, it will inevitably boomerang tomorrow, and may even make the difference between having or averting a world-wide racial war the day after.

Fight for Future

Those of you who are older and believe this will not come to pass in your time, I urge you to think about your children, and the kind of world you leave them, and make sure it is not the kind that will make them curse your name to the end of time.

The original motive for racism was economic — the greed for profit. As a socialist, I am convinced that eliminating the profit system, this dog-eat-dog jungle that goes by the name of capital-

ism, is the only sure way to eliminate racism altogether. In a socialist society, where the economy is planned and production is based on use and not profit, where no man can exploit another and the aim of all is the co-operative production of abundance for all, racial antagonisms will die out along with class distinctions and privileges.

But we cannot wait for the dawn of a new society before we begin uprooting racial discrimination in every form. We must do it now, as part of the struggle for a better world, as one of the ways to achieve a better world, and in self-interest.

I ask those of you who agree with this analysis to vote the Socialist Workers Party ticket in November, and to join our campaign between now and November. And I urgently invite all of you, whether or not you vote socialist, to join in all-out, unconditional support of the militant Negro struggle to end the racism that disgraces our country and acts as a brake on the basic economic, social and political changes that will benefit all workers, white and black. □

PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN NICARAGUA

by Paul Le Blanc

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HOW TO ARRIVE AT A HOPELESS THEORETICAL MUDDLE

by Steve Bloom

In the last issue of the Bulletin IDOM I wrote an article, "What Is an 'Anti-Imperialist' Revolution?" The subject of the article was the coverage of Ghana and Burkina-Faso (previously Upper Volta) by Ernest Harsch in a series of recent articles in Intercontinental Press. My primary assertion was that Harsch failed to provide his readers with a class analysis of the revolutionary upheavals in those African countries. I explained that this was true because he could not do this and still maintain any kind of theoretical consistency with the present programmatic perspectives of the SWP on the question of permanent revolution:

"Harsch cannot clearly define the class nature of his 'anti-imperialist' 'popular revolution' without revealing the utter bankruptcy of the SWP's current theoretical retreat from revolutionary Marxism and from the theory of permanent revolution....

"What the current revolutionary developments in Ghana and Burkina-Faso illustrate once again is that there can be no theoretical or programmatic distinction between an anti-imperialist revolution and a proletarian revolution. If these are not one and the same thing, then there can be no revolution at all or, more precisely, the attempt at 'anti-imperialist' revolution either will be crushed or will degenerate into a renewed dependence on the very imperialist system it set out to combat.

"Harsch and the press of the SWP cannot acknowledge this basic fact of life, because to do so confirms the fundamental kernel of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution--a theory the present leadership of the party has been trying to deny since 1981. But they also cannot go so far as to assert some other character for their 'anti-imperialist' 'popular revolution'--because to do that would require going all the way over to the Stalinist-Menshevik theory of stages

--something the SWP leadership has also been careful to avoid up to now. The result? Ernest Harsch and the party press say nothing. They introduce a new category, the 'anti-imperialist upsurge, and (to be sure) point out some of its contradictions. But they cannot give us any class definition of this phenomenon or of its characteristics without falling into a hopeless theoretical muddle."

As it turns out, the statement that Harsch failed to present a class analysis of events in Ghana and Burkina was premature. He has now done so. But the statement that if he tried such an analysis he would find himself mired in "a hopeless theoretical muddle" has been amply borne out. And Harsch finds himself joined in the middle of his muddle by two central leaders of the SWP--Steve Clark and Doug Jenness.

PARTY PRECONVENTION DISCUSSION

The immediate stimulus for the sojourn into the murky realms of theory by these SWP leaders was two articles written for the just-concluded SWP preconvention discussion by Derrick of the New Orleans branch. In them, Derrick argues that the governments led by Rawlings in Ghana and Sankara in Burkina-Faso constitute the "second and third workers and peasants governments to be erected on African soil." (The first was in Algeria under Ben Bella.) While we disagree with Derrick's conclusions--which were based primarily on material published as part of the Harsch series in IP--because he tends to have an extremely one-sided approach to what is taking place in these countries, his methodology is at least consistent.

That's more than we can say for his opponents in the debate. The central leadership of the party does not agree with Derrick--for some good reasons and some bad ones. Two articles appeared in the discussion bulletin in response to

his: "The Class Nature of the Governments in Ghana and Burkina: An Answer to Derrick," by Ernest, Newark and Doug, At-large; and "Further Discussion on the Party's Program and the Governments in Ghana and Burkina: a Response to Derrick," by Steve, At-large, and Doug, At-large.

The point of my present article is not to attempt a comprehensive survey or response to the ideas raised in the two articles responding to Derrick. That would take almost a book. But it is important to point out a few aspects because they represent significant further steps by the party leadership toward abandoning completely a revolutionary Marxist approach to the colonial revolution.

'DEMOCRATIC,' NOT 'ANTI-CAPITALIST' REVOLUTION?

The article by Ernest and Doug begins with a set of bulleted paragraphs which outline their basic argument. These assert: 1) "A workers' and peasants' government is the first form of government that can be expected to appear as the result of a successful anticapitalist revolution" (emphasis in original); 2) "most revolutions in this century have not been anticapitalist revolutions"; 3) in countries where "the overwhelming weight of precapitalist and even prefeudal class relations place democratic revolutions on the agenda today, not anticapitalist revolutions ... communists do not advocate workers' and peasants' governments"; and 4) "In Ghana, the emergence of a workers' and peasants' government is a possibility. ... In Burkina, it would be an error to even pose the perspective of a workers' and peasants' government at this time."

For the first time in this article, leaders of the SWP have counterposed the "democratic" and the "anticapitalist" revolutions in the colonial world. Up to now, the distinction that they have tried to impose between these ideas was not absolute. One was presented as a phase of the other; the different phases were seen as part of a single continuous process of revolution. And although their approach has been schematic and undialectical, it nevertheless kept their theory of the workers' and farmers' government much closer to the overall concepts that the revolutionary Marxist movement has consistently applied since the Russian revolution.

The present revelations are, however, a giant step in the direction of

the Stalinist-Menshevik two-stage theory of revolution--though the same conclusions are not yet drawn and the approach remains, at least for the present, theoretically limited to very backward countries.

DEEPENING CONFUSION

Steve and Doug, in their article, continue the same theme, explaining that Burkina lacks sufficient economic development for the creation of a workers' and peasants' government. And they do nothing to clarify the problems involved. In fact, their effort is so full of convoluted reasoning that it can only deepen confusion about the meaning of their new theoretical concepts. It's as if they set out to so thoroughly mystify the concept of the workers' and farmers' government, to present so many different variations of terminology and possible characterizations for revolutionary developments, that no member of the party will consider themselves capable of discussing things in this lofty realm. They will leave it to the high priests for correct interpretation.

Steve and Doug throw around concepts like "anticapitalist revolution," "anti-imperialist revolution," "democratic revolution," and "socialist revolution," making what they seem to think are important theoretical connections and distinctions between them--though they never make clear precisely how they define these terms or what the connections and distinctions are. In fact, their general method is to describe them in terms of what they are not. (As an example, Steve and Doug ask, "What do we mean when we speak of an 'anticapitalist revolution'?" and answer, "First, we are not necessarily talking about a socialist revolution." But they never get around to telling us what it is.)

All of this leads to an overwhelming contradiction as Steve and Doug try to discuss what should take place in the course of their "democratic revolution" in a country like Burkina--an "anti-imperialist revolution" that is not "anticapitalist." Again, the process is described in a series of negatives:

"This does not imply, however, that revolutionists in these countries don't need to develop a 'nose for power.'..."

"Nor should the tiny, largely commercial domestic bourgeoisie in such countries be looked to by revolutionists as a reliable ally in the struggle for power, let alone as the leading force. The alliance of the exploited producers --the peasants, other rural toilers, and

urban workers--are [sic] decisive to the success of a deep-going democratic revolution that can combat imperialist oppression, rid the country of precapitalist obstacles, and forge a nation....

"Nor does the road to social and economic progress in such countries necessarily pass through a stage of development under the domination of capital. In fact, in today's world such an evolution ends up harnessing these countries to growing superexploitation and oppression as part of the imperialist system."

So we do not have a revolution led by the "tiny, largely commercial domestic bourgeoisie." Very good. Who is it led by? By the alliance of the workers and peasants. Also good. But it is not an "anticapitalist revolution," merely an "anti-imperialist" "democratic" one. Nevertheless it does not lead through "a stage of development under the domination of capital." It all sounds very nice.

ONE MINOR INCONVENIENCE

But we have a small problem. How can all these things be true at once? If there is no stage of development dominated by capital then that means that the law of value (the circulation of commodities according to the laws of the capitalist market) and the exploitation of labor must be kept from asserting themselves as the dominant economic force. If that is not done, then there is no way to avoid the growing domination of capital--either domestic capital or imperialist capital or both. But the only term for a mode of production in which the law of value is not dominant, unless it is a precapitalist form (and the whole objective of the revolution is to advance beyond the presently dominant precapitalist forms), is socialist. The only class that can introduce such a system is the working class--allied with the poorest sections of the peasants and other social layers.

What about the fact that in a country like Burkina the working class is extremely small--virtually non-existent--and the economy is completely underdeveloped? To the minds of Steve and Doug this is an insuperable obstacle, but that is because they look at the problem only on its surface, and they view Burkina as if it existed in isolation from the rest of the world.

First of all, since the victory of the Russian revolution, no country has been on its own after the workers and

peasants have come to power. It is safe to say that none of the other workers' states that have been formed could have succeeded on their own, without aid from the USSR. (This is true despite the degeneration of the USSR under Stalin and the self-interested character of the Soviet bureaucracy's aid to other revolutions.) Today, countries like Ghana and Burkina can also count on assistance from Cuba. This is a factor correctly considered vital by Derrick in his discussion of the Ghanaian and Burkinabe revolutions, but simply dismissed by Steve and Doug as somehow not applicable in these cases.

But let's consider the problem as Ernest, Steve, and Doug do, from the narrow point of view of what's happening in Burkina itself. It is essential to do this on the basis of a completely different methodology from the one presently employed by the SWP leadership. We must maintain a dialectical appreciation of the various factors involved and avoid any trace of schematism.

What is the primary task of the Burkinabe revolution -- the task that flows from the very economic backwardness cited by Ernest, Steve, and Doug as the obstacle to an anticapitalist revolution there? Is it not precisely the economic development of the country, the overcoming of that backwardness, the bringing of Burkina into the twentieth century? On this, of course, we all agree. How then is this to be accomplished?

Harsch in his IP articles discusses the People's Development Program (PPD) being undertaken by the government. He describes it as "A 15-month crash plan of economic development that focuses largely on improving conditions in the countryside: the construction of dams, irrigation canals, roads, health clinics, schools, animal vaccination centers, grain storage bins, and other basic facilities. Most are of a modest scale, planned at minimal cost and involving the mobilization of local labor power through the organizing efforts of the CDRs."

Harsch also describes other projects, such as the completion of the Tambao railway, which is being accomplished through a similar mobilization of labor. All of this is quite satisfactory for the initial stages of creating a basic economic infrastructure. We note that it already begins to organize labor on a collective basis--though some might say that there is a

strong streak of precapitalist communalism involved, which is certainly true.

But as the development projects get beyond this most rudimentary stage, which will occur relatively quickly, further economic growth cannot be continued on this basis alone. To truly develop its economy Burkina will require a rapid evolution of the social division of labor and the creation of a genuine working class.

Under what conditions can this take place? If we are to avoid a "stage under the domination of capital" as Steve and Doug insist we must, it means that the developing working class must itself organize the process of economic growth. If that is not true, who else will do it? What other classes in society today, besides the bourgeoisie and the proletariat can run the economy? And by what means can this emerging working class organize the economy except through a continuation of the collective method (no longer in any meaningful sense on a precapitalist basis) and centralized planning? And what sort of an animal is this, if not a "socialist revolution" (or at least an "anticapitalist" one)?

Only if we take the term "socialist revolution" to be identical to the "introduction of socialism" can we insist that this is impossible today in the economically underdeveloped world--even in a country as economically backward as Burkina. But such an identity is completely schematic, and not at all what we have ever meant by permanent revolution.

Far from being impossible, the socialist revolution is an absolute necessity for countries like Burkina--not in a sectarian or schematic sense which tries to leap over objective problems of economic development, but in a dialectical sense which insists that the only option open for economic development in the interests of the oppressed masses in the colonial and semicolonial world (i.e. development that does not go through a "stage under the domination of capital") lies through the conquest of power by the working class itself, allied with other social layers which will benefit from its rule. In a case such as Burkina, this must take place even though the proletariat is barely perceptible as a social force in the country.

GENERALIZED ERROR

The point of all the theorizing by Ernest, Doug, and Steve seems to be that

there is no need for revolutionary Marxists to be too concerned about revolutions in colonial and semicolonial countries that do not directly challenge bourgeois property. Here is the way Steve and Doug put it: "The point we want to underline here is the implication [made by Derrick--S.B.] that the only 'real' revolutionary processes are those that result in the establishment of workers' and peasants' governments, in other words, those that are anticapitalist. But surely the social upheavals set in motion by the overthrow of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia or the shah of Iran are 'real revolutionary processes.' And weren't the national liberation struggles against Portuguese colonial rule in Angola and Mozambique, and against white colonial settler rule in Zimbabwe, 'real' revolutions?"

"The petty bourgeois and bourgeois regimes that emerged out of these revolutions, and that have been consolidated since then to one or another degree, have presided over the implementation of important democratic tasks. These range from political independence, to the overthrow of proimperialist tyrants, to (particularly in Ethiopia) significant agrarian reform."

(We should also note that this analysis--of some kind of anti-imperialist revolution that revolutionary Marxists simply observe and support as a general pattern in Africa -- was proclaimed publicly in a "News Analysis" article by Harsch, "Upheaval in Africa," in the August 5 issue of Intercontinental Press. This Harsch article discusses Ghana and Burkina, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, in terms which are identical to those used in the discussion articles by Ernest, Doug, and Steve from the SWP internal bulletin.)

But this "analysis" is completely one-sided and quite inadequate. Of course it is true that "most revolutions in this century have not been anticapitalist revolutions." But most revolutions in this century in the colonial world have also failed miserably in actually gaining liberation from the stranglehold of imperialism and in qualitatively improving the lot of the oppressed masses.

None of us will dispute that the examples cited by Doug and Steve were "real revolutions." But that is not the end of what must be understood about them. They were real incomplete revolutions; revolutions that stopped part way. The "political independence" which they won meant simply trading the pre-

vious colonial status for semicolonial dependency, or trading a monarch for some other kind of repressive government. Genuine gains won by the masses in the revolutionary process have either been taken back, undermined, or limited in their content. That is inevitable when the revolutionary process stops short of putting political and economic power in the hands of the toilers.

Can Ernest and Steve and Doug cite a single example from among these "anti-imperialist but not anticapitalist revolutions" in Iran, Angola, Mozambique, or Zimbabwe where the failure to move forward to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in alliance with the poor peasantry has not resulted in the relatively rapid reestablishment of "a stage of development under the domination of capital"? They cannot. (And if the same is not yet true about Ghana and Burkina it is only because the revolutionary mobilizations of the masses themselves still pose a real question about the final outcome.) This stark truth, by itself, demonstrates that all of the theorizing by Ernest and Steve and Doug is nothing but an empty fraud that they are trying to perpetrate on the party.

Why has the party leadership chosen to make this new foray into theory? What is the purpose of their fraud? Once again, as with most of the theoretical innovations they have attempted in the last four years, this one has its roots

in their adaptation to the theoretical and programmatic weaknesses of the Castroist current on an international scale. Castroism gives uncritical support to many bourgeois-nationalist and petty-bourgeois regimes in the semicolonial countries, especially those that came to power as a result of genuine popular revolutions, or that come in conflict with imperialism.

With the adoption of the thesis presented by Ernest, Steve, and Doug--that proletarian revolutionaries should recognize the validity of "anti-imperialist democratic revolutions" which are not "anticapitalist"--the SWP leadership has removed one more obstacle which stands between our traditional program and the Castroist one. The party leadership, like Castro, can now give uncritical support to the Dergue in Ethiopia, or the MPLA in Angola (or even Khomeini in Iran!), without having to deal with an irreconcilable theoretical conflict.

But though they may have now removed a theoretical roadblock from their path, they will still have to deal with the enormous contradiction that their new theory faces when confronted with reality. In the end, as we know from long experience, in the contest between theory and reality, reality will always prove to be the stronger. This is a truth which the SWP leadership may choose to ignore for the present, but they do so at their peril.

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A NEW BOOK OF CANNON'S WRITINGS AND SPEECHES

by George Breitman

THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF AMERICA 1932-34 by James P. Cannon. Monad Press, 1985, 439 pp., \$9.95 paper. Distributed by Pathfinder Press, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

James P. Cannon (1890-1974) was not the best-known socialist leader in this country. Figures like Eugene V. Debs, Daniel De Leon, William Z. Foster, and Earl Browder were known more widely and followed by more people, at least for a while. But Cannon was the one from whose writings revolutionaries can learn the most, whether they are young or old, recent recruits or veterans. So the publication of another book of his writings and speeches is a cause for rejoicing among those who need or can appreciate the finest Marxist literature written in this country.

The nine books by Cannon that had been published at the time of his death 11 years ago are an educational treasure trove for the socialist movement, indispensable for those who want to learn the lessons of the past, positive and negative. But that tells only half the story. Cannon also left a fairly large amount of papers -- unpublished letters, texts or notes of his speeches, and articles and circulars printed only in internal bulletins of the Socialist Workers Party and its predecessors. The SWP decided to publish a series of posthumous books containing the most important material in these papers from 1928 on, plus out-of-print pamphlets and articles originally published in newspapers and magazines. It was estimated that these might add another nine or ten books to Cannon's total.

The first of these books appeared in 1975, the second in 1977 [see "A Guide to James P. Cannon's Books" on p. 30]. After a four-year interval the third (The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31) was published in 1981, and now, after another four years, we have the fourth (The Communist League of America 1932-34). The last two contain the earliest articles and speeches of the posthumous books, and should be read to-

gether as Cannon's account of the first six years of the Trotskyist movement in this country, as recorded by him at that time. These were the years during which the CLA leaders, who had adhered to Leninism when they joined the CP in its early days, got the equivalent of a postgraduate course in both Leninist politics and Leninist organizational principle from Trotsky and the Left Opposition, the chief continuators of Leninism in this period.

After he had time to reflect on them further, Cannon was to return to the events and problems of the early Left Opposition in later books (The History of American Trotskyism among others). But in the posthumous books about 1928-34 we get the opinions of Cannon as participant, without any advantages from hindsight. For those who are interested in the development of revolutionary ideas, these books offer fascinating material to compare with later writings of the same author.

PUBLIC AND INTERNAL SOURCES

There are 90 separate Cannon items in the new book. A little over half were first published in The Militant, New International, and New Militant, and deal with public events and problems of the revolutionary movement. The rest are taken from Cannon's papers, CLA minutes, and CLA internal bulletins; most of them are about a bitter factional struggle between a group led by Cannon and Arne Swabeck and another led by Max Shachtman and Martin Abern which brought the CLA to the verge of a split in 1932-33.

For purposes of review, the book can also be divided into two chronological parts: The first part, up to the middle of 1933, was written when the CLA's main orientation was reforming the Communist International and the Communist Party in this country along Leninist lines, and gaining readmission to their ranks. The second part, following Hitler's easy victory in Germany and the Comintern's reaffirmation of the policies that had contributed to that

catastrophe, was written after the International Left Opposition, founded by Trotsky, and the CLA decided that the Comintern and its parties could no longer be reformed and needed to be replaced by a new Leninist International and national affiliates.

A lot of things have changed in the last half century, including language, literary styles, and methods of exposition. But readers don't have to brace themselves against anything archaic in this book. Cannon of course uses the language of the 1930s (what else could he use?), including a few terms like "Negro" that have become outmoded. But his style is vibrant, and astonishingly "modern." While his literary talent did not reach its highest level until the 1940s, in the 1930s he already was one of the best journalists trained and developed by the radical movement in this country. If you didn't know when he was writing, you could easily assume from the style that he was writing now or very recently.

The content of the book, that is, its politics, is of even higher quality than its style. The things Cannon wrote about were not only relevant and useful for radicals of the thirties, grappling with problems arising out of that time and place -- they are and remain educational in the truest sense of that term for radicals today, beset by other conditions. Cannon liked to call himself an agitator, but we can see now that he was above all an educator, a revolutionary educator. Because the method he used is still appropriate, he speaks to us across the years much more directly and effectively than most of our contemporaries. There is simply no comparison between his writings in this book and those written at the same time by Foster and Browder of the CP or Norman Thomas of the SP. (The CP of course would never dream of reprinting Foster's and Browder's writings of that period -- unless it returns to the lunatic ultraleftism it practiced then.)

SAMPLE OF THE SUBJECTS

It is impossible to convey in a brief space the rich variety of subjects and themes covered in this book. Here is at least a mention of some:

- Realistic assessments of the stage of radicalization the working class had and had not reached in 1932, in the third year of the Great Depression, at a time when the Stalinists insisted the workers were ready to make a revolution.

- The need to reject antiwar slogans that give the slightest concession to chauvinism.

- Two articles about the Scottsboro case, a racist frame-up of nine Black youth which became the decade's most crucial civil rights struggle -- one defining the correct relationship between defense committees and defense lawyers; the other a controversial argument by Cannon that the Scottsboro case should be oriented first of all to the unions and white workers, rather than to the Black community.

- A 1932 resolution giving the CLA's support to the Left Opposition's international leadership in its fight against unassimilable and disruptive elements in Europe, and a 1934 letter in which Cannon described his efforts to prevent or contain splits during a mission he undertook in France.

- Many articles about various union situations, concerning tactics in both the conservative AFL unions and the small and self-isolated "red unions" created and dominated by the Stalinists; the fallacy of the slogan of "rank and file leadership" in the unions; the need for trade union unity, and concrete ways to advance it in different specific situations.

- Extensive notes for a debate about the IWW with a representative of that organization.

- Close attention to internal developments in other radical groups -- not just the CP, to whom the CLA appealed for readmission when appropriate, but also to the Socialist Party, the Proletarian Party, the American Workers Party, etc.

- Speeches at CP-dominated unemployed conferences where the CLA was able to present its proposals and criticisms.

- Problems in the CLA's relations with Trotsky, then living in Turkey, which Cannon feared could do the gravest damage to the movement.

- Hitler's assumption of power in Germany, and the CLA's last unsuccessful efforts early in 1933 to win the CP to a Leninist united front policy against fascism.

- Patient but firm efforts to keep a CLA member from capitulating to anticom-

munist pressures in the Illinois miners union to which he belonged.

● The Left Opposition's crucial "turn" in 1933 toward the formation of the Fourth International and a new revolutionary party in this country, which was the most important single decision it ever made.

● The search for other groups who would help to build the new revolutionary party in this country, starting with groups now long forgotten, and ending with the left-centrist AWP, led by A.J. Muste, which joined with the CLA in creating the new Workers Party of the United States at the end of 1934.

● Why the CLA decided to march in one 1934 May Day parade in New York City and not in another.

● On-the-scene articles about a hotel workers strike in New York early in 1934 and about the CLA-led teamsters strikes that turned Minneapolis into a union town later that year.

THE CRISIS OF 1932-33

The subject that gets the most space in this book is the CLA's internal crisis and near-split in 1932-33. This allocation of space is completely justified because that crisis produced the first serious test of the CLA's caliber as a revolutionary organization since its foundation in 1929. If it had failed to respond correctly, U.S. Trotskyism might have been destroyed then and there, and whatever the CLA or Cannon might have done or said after that would have had little or no effect on the subsequent development of the revolutionary movement.

In some ways this dispute was unlike any of the later internal struggles that put their mark on our movement. There undoubtedly were differences between the Cannonites and Shachtmanites, but these differences were of a non-principled character and undeveloped or unclear. The bitter struggle between the two tendencies was therefore premature. But the leaders on both sides, frustrated by the CLA's isolation and temporary objective difficulties, kept sharpening the tensions instead of trying to alleviate them. It was not easy for them to overcome the miseducation they got in the post-Lenin Comintern and the faction-ridden CP, where they had been taught that according to Leninism you

must prepare for split whenever differences arise in a revolutionary party.

Fortunately the CLA was part of an international organization of genuine Leninists, which intervened in the person of Trotsky and the International Secretariat. They convinced both sides to pull back from the abyss of an unjustified and incomprehensible split, dissolve their factions, and seek the kind of comradely collaboration that had existed at the CLA's foundation. (Some of Trotsky's letters are reprinted as an appendix in this book.) The achievements of the next six years -- probably the most fruitful and innovative in our history -- could not have occurred without the collaboration re-established in 1933 with the help of our international movement.

Cannon's views on the CLA crisis while it was unfolding are well and fairly represented in this book. But there is a gap in his papers between May 1933, before the factional struggle was called off, and September 1933, when the former factional antagonists were starting to work together effectively in implementing the turn to a new International. For this reason there is little documentation of Cannon's attitude toward the ending of the factional fight when it occurred in June, except that he supported it, and little about his later evaluation of the 1932-33 experience.

In most cases the editors of this book correctly take care of such gaps by quoting what Cannon said on the subject in later years. In this case they fail to do so, despite readily available citations from Cannon. As a result the full significance of the 1932-33 fight and the lessons Cannon learned from it are not conveyed in this book. The uniqueness of this fight is not brought home. The urgency of the situation and its effects on Cannon and other participants are ignored or downplayed. The hard-earned lesson that political differences do not necessarily lead to split and that Leninism actively strives to avert unnecessary splits are muted in this book although they were burned into Cannon's consciousness and guided the SWP throughout his years of leadership. For conclusions and a tone completely absent from this book, see Cannon's speech to the SWP National Committee on November 1, 1943, where he decries the "goddamned barren fight [of 1932-33] over questions of personalities," rather than political differences, and describes the changes in himself, under the influence of Trotsky, from "a first-

class factional hoodlum" in 1928, "who was wrong about many things, including my methods and my impatience and rudeness with comrades," to one who now knows "more about how to lead a party than that." (The Socialist Workers Party in World War II, Pathfinder Press, 1975, pp. 372-374)

THE EDITORIAL MATERIAL

On the whole the editorial material in the book (introduction, editorial notes, glossary, etc.) ranges from good to acceptable. Editors Fred Stanton and Michael Taber do well in filling in the economic and social background of the period. As one who is familiar with the papers they had to work with, I can testify that the items they selected for publication are representative of the whole and that their choices can be justified on the basis of sound editorial judgment.

But I do wish they had been a little less stingy about using Cannon's notes for speeches. These require more editorial time and work than letters or published articles, but the results can be rewarding, as was shown, for example, when the Bulletin IDOM, No. 13, November 1984, printed an edited version of a January 1932 speech under the title "James P. Cannon on Permanent Revolution in Russia." If the editors of this book did not want to use the fruits of our editing, they could have used their own version, instead of omitting it.

Some factual errors in the introduction and notes could have been avoided with a little more research. It is not true, for example, that "the vast majority of Black workers were concentrated in the mass-production industries" in 1932-34 (p. 6). Or that the CLA never "missed" an issue of The Militant in those years (p. 9). Or that "inexperience in organizing financial matters" was really a cause for the CLA being broke all the time (p. 12).

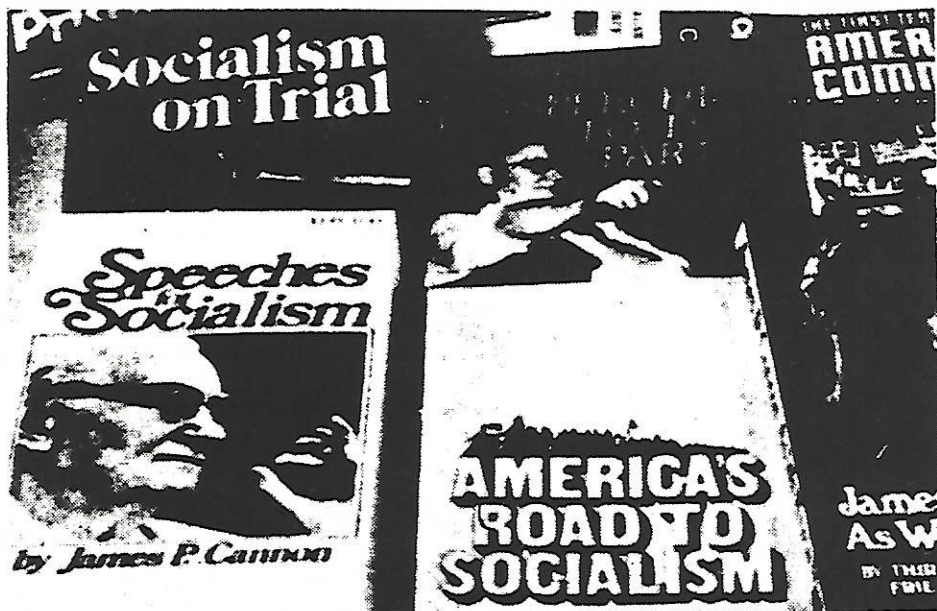
Worse than factual errors are editorial evasiveness or circumspection. I have mentioned the point Trotsky made in 1933 about the Comintern's bureaucratic and unprincipled methods being carried over into the CLA and being responsible in part for the poisonous character of the 1932-33 factional fight. The editors do not challenge this idea and they

quote Trotsky on it but it makes them uncomfortable and they deal with it in a rather abstract and vague way, not using the names of anyone, and giving the impression of people tiptoeing through a minefield rather than of researchers trying to illuminate new historical areas.

Another example of the editors' uneasiness with plain statements is their assertion that "During this period the CLA was not calling for the creation of a labor party based on the unions." (p. 18) As a matter of fact, the CLA in this period was opposed to advocacy of a labor party, and said so. Why not say the CLA was opposed (a true and clear statement) instead of saying it did not call for creation of a labor party (also true, but only part of the truth)?

In some cases the editors neglect their responsibility to help the reader understand things that are unclear or unexplained in Cannon's text. For example, in a 1932 article Cannon contended that "democratic centralism" was applicable to unions in the U.S. (pp. 128, 130-131) The context shows he was speaking about the need for democracy and centralized leadership in the unions. But democratic centralism is a term generally used for the organizational structure of a revolutionary party, not for unions. Some guidance for the reader would be helpful here. Had Cannon employed this usage for unions before this particular article? Did others in his time use it that way? Did Cannon continue to use it that way after 1932, and when did he stop? But the editors either are not interested or don't feel it is their task to offer any help about such problems.

Books like this are expensive to publish. Because of their relatively low sales, publishers must expect to subsidize their publication, not make a profit from them. So we not only should read and study but also should buy copies of the Cannon, Trotsky, and similar books, get others to buy them, including libraries, and use them as gifts. That could be a way of showing our appreciation for the work and costs of producing these useful tools for the movement and of encouraging the publishers to produce the remaining books of the Cannon series sooner.



A GUIDE TO JAMES P. CANNON'S BOOKS

Nine books by Cannon were published before his death in 1974. Four additional books have since been issued, and several more have been scheduled. Following is a summary of the contents of the already published books and of the unpublished material, with a suggestion about the order in which they can be read by people who are becoming acquainted with Cannon for the first time.

The History of American Trotskyism (published 1944). A series of popular lectures given in 1942 about the development of the movement from the time Cannon and others were expelled from the CP in 1928, up to the formation of the SWP at the start of 1938.

The First Ten Years of American Communism (1962). Letters and articles about how the Communist Party evolved from its foundation in 1919 until its division into three tendencies a decade later. Also includes Cannon's pamphlets on the IWW and Eugene V. Debs.

The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31 (1981). Most of this posthumous collec-

tion reprints Cannon's Militant articles from those first years of the U.S. Trotskyist movement, but also contains many letters about internal problems that were never published before.

The Communist League of America 1932-34 (1985). This is a direct continuation of the preceding book, with major emphasis on a crippling internal factional struggle that almost led to a split in 1932-33. In the last half of the period covered, the Trotskyists stopped trying to reform the Comintern and began working for a new International and new revolutionary parties.

The Struggle for a Proletarian Party (1943). A pamphlet, letters, speeches, and articles tracing the 1939-40 struggle led by Trotsky and Cannon to keep the SWP on the revolutionary track at the start of World War II, when the SWP's program and traditions came under attack from a revisionist tendency led by Max Shachtman and James Burnham.

Socialism on Trial (1942). Cannon's courtroom testimony in the 1941 Minneapolis trial of SWP and

Teamster members indicted for opposing World War II. Pathfinder's fifth edition (1973) also contains as an appendix the 1942 pamphlet Defense Policy in the Minneapolis Trial, with a criticism by Grandizo Munis and an answer by Cannon.

The Socialist Workers Party in World War II (1975). This posthumous book prints pamphlets, articles, and speeches from the SWP's April 1940 convention until Cannon went to prison at the end of 1943 to serve the term given to him at the Minneapolis trial, along with many internal letters, circulars, and speeches that had never been printed publicly before.

Letters from Prison (1968). Letters about SWP party-building problems and factional developments written from federal prison in Sandstone, Minnesota, 1944-45.

The Struggle for Socialism in the 'American Century' (1977). Another posthumous book, containing writings and speeches during the end of the war and its aftermath, 1945-47. Among these are the pamphlets on the "American Thesis," written for the SWP's first postwar convention

in 1946, and "American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism," written at the start of the witch hunt in 1947.

Speeches to the Party (1973). Another serious internal struggle broke out in the SWP and the Fourth International in the early 1950s, culminating in a split in both organizations in 1953. Most of Cannon's writings and speeches on this dispute are included here.

The ten books cited above are arranged by periods chronologically, after the first two titles. In addition there are three books which, because of their nature, can be read in any sequence:

America's Road to Socialism (1953). The text of a series of lectures given in Los Angeles in December 1952-January 1953 in which Cannon presented his vision of the socialist future and the measures needed to make it possible.

Notebook of an Agitator (1958). A sampling of socialist journalism over a 30-year period -- from 1926, when Cannon was fighting to save the lives of the radical martyrs Sacco and Vanzetti; through 1934, when Cannon was writing for the daily strike paper of the Minneapolis Teamsters; through 1950-51, when he wrote three memorable letters against the Korean war to the president and Congress; to 1956, when he paid tribute to a deceased comrade and friend, John G. Wright.

Speeches for Socialism (1971). A sampling of speeches over 40 years (1921-61), covering a broad variety of politi-

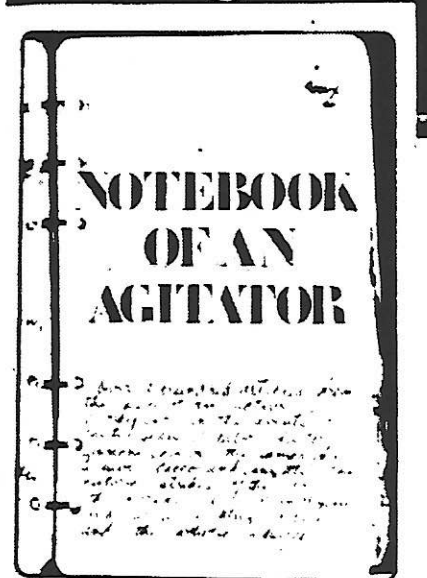
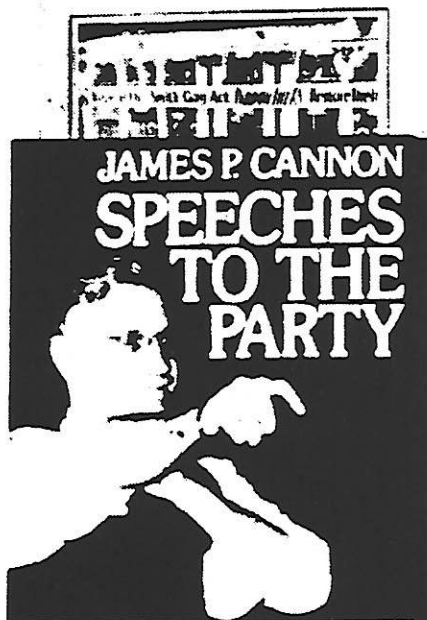
cal, historical and personal subjects, originally presented at party conventions, committee meetings, public forums, banquets, memorial meetings, and birthday celebrations.

The books that are still to come should cover the following periods:

1935-39: This should document the Workers Party of

James P. Cannon
WRITINGS AND SPEECHES 1940-43

The Socialist Workers Party in World War II



the United States, organized at the end of 1934 and dissolved by convention authority in 1936 when the members voted to enter the Socialist Party to try to fuse with its left wing; the experience of the Trotskyists in the SP, from which they were expelled in the summer of 1937; the foundation of the SWP in 1938 and its development until the fall of 1939, when the fight with the Shachtmanites (reported in The Struggle for a Proletarian Party) began. This 4-1/2 year period may need two volumes.

1947-52: This should cover the period between The Struggle for Socialism in the 'American Century' and the internal dispute of 1952-53 documented in Speeches to the Party. In those years the SWP valiantly fought against the cold war and the witch hunt, but became increasingly isolated and squeezed out of the labor and other mass movements.

1954-68: This is the period after Cannon gave up the post of SWP national secretary and moved permanently to Los Angeles, where his main role was in advising and making suggestions to the national center in New York. He made some speeches but his main legacy during these years was hundreds of political letters until 1968, when he stopped writing altogether. There are enough of these letters to fill several books.

All books listed above can be ordered from Pathfinder Press, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Ask them for details or a catalog.

VOTE FOR THE SOCIALIST CANDIDATES

The 1985 election campaign for Mayor of New York City is going into high gear now that the primary is over. Ed Koch, a Democrat, is running for a third term. Koch will be opposed by City Council President Carol Bellamy on the Liberal ticket and an assortment of Republicans, Conservatives, Right-to-Lifers, etc. None of these candidates, however, has any kind of answer to the real problems working New Yorkers face which have reached crisis proportions:

- Low-income housing is not profitable, so developers will not build it. The result in New York City is that rental apartments affordable to working people are almost impossible to find. Yet there is a building boom in Manhattan — in luxury condominiums. One advertisement features a “bargain” price for a one-bedroom apartment — \$160,000. The homeless population has reached shocking proportions, including families with young children, while the Koch administration evicts squatters from abandoned buildings. Moreover the city has refused to honor promises to rehabilitate buildings abandoned by their owners and taken over by the city.
- Mass public transportation in the city is a nightmare. Working-class New Yorkers ride to work under conditions which would be illegal if the riders were animals rather than people. The MTA, with the collusion of the Reagan, Koch, and Cuomo administrations, is cutting back drastically on subway and bus service to working people. They plead lack of funds, but they are pouring increasing millions into the banks to pay off interest on transportation bonds instead of using it to improve service and repair the results of a decade of neglect. At the same time, they are blaming the transport workers for the decline of the city’s transit system. The corruption and mismanagement that have plagued the 63rd Street subway tunnel scheme since its inception, like the padding of expense accounts among TA executives, are typical of the new Cuomo-approved Kiley-Gunn MTA management.
- The New York City police have declared open season on Black and Hispanic youth. Beatings, torture with electric stun guns and outright murder are “all in the line of duty.” While Commissioner Ward organizes routine “investigations,” residents of the Black and Puerto Rican communities of the city live in terror.

Only one of the announced candidates for Mayor of New York has any program that addresses these and other critical problems facing working New Yorkers. That candidate is Andrea Gonzalez, the candidate of the Socialist Workers Party. She is not a well-to-do lawyer, but a Puerto Rican worker. She is concerned not with what will bring profits to real estate tycoons like Donald Trump and Leona Helmsley but with what will provide jobs, decent housing, transportation, and social services to New Yorkers who need them.

Gonzalez’s program does not stop at the Hudson River, however. New York’s problems are different from those of other cities only in degree. Gonzalez’s program calls for taking power away from the Trumps and Helmsleys of every city — and every country in which the bankers and businessmen rule — and giving it to the working people, both in the cities and on the farms. She calls for an immediate halt to hostilities against Nicaragua, where the workers and farmers have taken power for themselves, and for an end to all political, military, economic, and moral support to the criminal racist regime in South Africa. Her program speaks to the issues all workers face — unemployment, war, racism, sexism, and environmental pollution. She calls for a strong affirmative action program to provide jobs for women and minorities and to make up for centuries of discrimination. Workers, through their unions, should take the first step towards taking power for themselves, by organizing their own political party, a labor party. Working people in power could create the most democratic government this country has ever seen, extending democracy to decisions about problems which really affect people’s lives.

For these reasons, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency urges all working people and their allies to vote for the Socialist Workers Party ticket — in New York headed by Andrea Gonzalez, SWP candidate for Mayor and in New Jersey headed by Mark Satinoff, SWP candidate for Governor.

VOTE SOCIALIST WORKERS IN NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY!

Andrea Gonzalez for Mayor of New York

Mark Satinoff for Governor of New Jersey

Statement adopted by the New York Local Organizing Committee of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency
P.O. Box 1947, New York, N.Y. 10003

F.I.T. NATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE DISCUSSES PERSPECTIVES

by Stuart Brown

A meeting of the National Organizing Committee of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, held in Cleveland, Ohio, on September 7 and 8, initiated a discussion about perspectives for the organization. The meeting had been called in line with the policy of the F.I.T.--to reopen discussion on our overall tasks after every major event in our struggle with the Barnes faction in the leadership of the SWP. The NOC considered what conclusions should be drawn as a result of the SWP's August convention, which rejected the demand of the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International for the readmission of expelled members into the party.

Three initial positions were presented at the NOC meeting. On the basis of the discussion there, resolutions will be written and presented to the F.I.T. as a whole for discussion. And that discussion, in turn, will lead to a national conference of the F.I.T. next February which can resolve the question of what approach we should now take toward advancing the perspectives of a Fourth Internationalist party in this country.

Despite the differences of opinion in the NOC on some aspects of our present tasks, there was general agreement that with the conclusion of the most recent preconvention discussion in the SWP it would be appropriate for the F.I.T. to make a number of shifts. Rather than continue concentrating almost exclusively on the very specific discussion we have been trying to have with the leadership and membership of the SWP, we will now undertake a broader, more comprehensive analysis of the U.S. and international class struggles. This will be reflected in the kinds of articles which will be featured in future issues of the Bulletin IDOM.

Other questions were also considered by the NOC. One of these was what might now be done by the leading bodies of the Fourth International in light of the refusal by the SWP convention to take even the slightest step to comply with the world congress decision

on our appeal. There was also a discussion of the present stage of the antiwar movement in this country, and a decision to continue the orientation of the F.I.T. toward building the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean.

EMERGENCY NATIONAL COUNCIL PLANS FALL ACTIVITIES

by Evelyn Sell

The U.S.-fueled crisis confronting the peoples of Central America was the starting point for the September 7 discussions and decisions of the Steering Committee of the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean (ENC). The meeting was held in Cleveland and included members from the Midwest, and the East and West coasts. In addition to those elected at a national conference held in June, there were voting representatives from several organizations which have affiliated to the Council. Recently affiliated organizations include Lodge 1380 of Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (BRAC), Honduran Task Force, Puget Sound chapter of Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Workmen's Circle of Cleveland, and the Minneapolis Labor Committee on Central America.

An update of critical situations in four Central American countries was presented by Sheldon Liss, Council Executive Committee member and Professor of Latin American History and Government at the University of Akron.

Because the ENC program emphasizes the links between the anti-apartheid and anti-intervention movements, there were reports and discussions on the fall actions against apartheid in South Africa, how best to build collaboration between participants in the two movements, and the incorporation of anti-apartheid issues and activities in the next ENC national conference.

Many ENC members are involved in organizing the October 11 and 12 anti-apartheid actions. Council Executive Committee member Ione Biggs, for example, is a coordinator of Cleveland's October 11 Anti-Apartheid Committee and a featured speaker at the "Rally Against

U.S. Ties to Apartheid." Biggs has recently returned from the International Women's Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, and gave a report to the ENC Steering Committee about that event, and its connection to the anti-apartheid and anti-intervention struggles.

The ENC's participation in the national Steering Committee of the April Actions Coalition was reviewed by Jim Lafferty, Council Executive Committee member, who is assistant director of the Center for Seafarers' Rights in New York. The very successful mobilizations on April 20 were not followed up with a national call for similar actions in the fall and, as a result, almost all of the local coalitions have dissolved or are inactive. The last meeting of the April Actions national steering committee voted to support the various fall actions called by other groups and voted to discuss with national and local organizations the possibility of holding mobilizations on April 26, 1986. The ENC will continue its participation in the April Actions Coalition.

Jerry Gordon, Council Coordinator, outlined the current situation in the anti-intervention movement. He defined the aims of the ENC by pointing out what the council would not attempt to do as well as by projecting specific activities to be carried out in the coming months. The ENC, which does not claim to be "The Movement," will not be calling mass actions on its own. The ENC aims to carry out the program and purpose adopted at its second conference: to build a mass action wing of the broader anti-intervention movement. This will be pursued patiently through education, debate, discussion, and reminding activists of the power displayed by the recent April 20 mobilizations. The ENC will continue to collaborate with other groups in carrying out actions focusing on Central America and the Caribbean, and will continue to advance the idea of unity of the anti-intervention movement.

Urging a whole-hearted involvement of ENC activists, and the ENC as an organization, in the anti-apartheid fight, Gordon explained, "We need to expose the hypocrisy of the U.S. government that says 'we have to overthrow the Sandinistas because they violate human rights!'--but, at the same time, this same U.S. government supports the apartheid regime in South Africa."

Participants in the ENC Steering Committee meeting recognized the fact that they are "swimming against the tide" at this time in pursuing their

perspective of united mass actions carried out by independent, non-partisan, democratically-organized coalitions. Many of the established organizations are gearing up for the 1986 election campaign and do not favor mass actions in the streets because such mobilizations prove embarrassing to liberal Democratic Party candidates--who voice anti-intervention sentiments, but cast their votes for more aid to the contras.

Faced with this political situation and with a slander campaign directed against the ENC, the Steering Committee critically assessed the results of the second Emergency National Conference--held last June in Minneapolis--in order to more effectively build for its third conference, which will take place January 24-26, 1986, in Los Angeles.

A written evaluation of the Second Emergency National Conference was distributed and an oral report was presented by ENC Coordinating Committee member Michael Livingston, an activist in the Honduran Task Force who played a leading role in the Minneapolis Planning Committee which organized the second conference. The written report noted: "The Minneapolis Conference had a number of excellent speakers and workshops, had a respectable number of participants when compared to the number of people attending similar conferences (such as the recent CISPES national conference), and helped to consolidate the ENC as an organization." Among the weaknesses noted were: lower than expected local participation from solidarity activists and the religious community; a slow start of work on the conference, partly because ENC organizers were also active participants in building the April 20 mobilization; problems of consultation with local anti-intervention activists; inadequate publicity; and fund-raising opportunities which were not pursued adequately.

Based on this experience, a number of suggestions were made to improve efforts for the third conference. Because ENC members from around the country had reached similar conclusions, most of these suggestions were incorporated into plans for the January conference in Los Angeles. The general character and major features of that conference were discussed and approved. These include: a greater focus on the labor orientation of the ENC, strong linkage of the concern for the right of self-determination shared by activists in the anti-apartheid and anti-interventionist movements, greater clarification

of the nature and goals of the ENC, and more time scheduled for conference participants to discuss substantive matters.

With these considerations in mind, the Steering Committee approved a framework which includes: A Friday night public rally entitled "Labor Speaks Out--Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean, Against Apartheid in South Africa;" a Saturday night solidarity demonstration to support the peoples of Central America, the Caribbean and South Africa struggling

for human rights and self-determination; consideration of proposals for action and organizational matters during plenary sessions Saturday and Sunday; and Saturday workshops that will deal with priority issues rather than cover a wide range of topics.

For more information about the council, or to affiliate: write: Emergency National Council, P.O. Box 3172, Cleveland, Ohio, 44121. For details about the national conference in January write: Emergency National Conference, P.O. Box 480598, Los Angeles, CA 90048.

LETTERS

STOP IGNORING THE CAMPUS

I have been reading the back issues of your Bulletin because I want to understand the reasons for the difficulties and decline of the SWP in recent years, when I was not in close touch with it. Reading your material gives me a more objective picture of your views than I got from some friends in the SWP. Lenin was certainly right in advising us to read the positions of all sides in a dispute if we really want to understand it.

It will take more reading and thought before I can reach solid conclusions about your explanations for the crisis of the SWP. But there is one thing that I think is missing from your explanations, that is of central importance. And that is the decision that the SWP and YSA made at the end of the 1970s to withdraw from virtually all work on the college and high school campuses where they had been active since the 1960s.

Even if everything else they decided -- in relation to Cuba and a "new International," in relation to proletarianizing the party and YSA, etc. -- had been 100 percent correct (and it wasn't), this single decision to withdraw from serious work among students would have doomed both the party and the YSA to demoralization and disarray.

The truth is that the main cadres for all revolutionary or radical parties or groups in this country have been recruited from the campus during the last quarter of a century at least. The present leadership team of the SWP knows this as well as anyone, and ought to, since virtually all of its people were won to the YSA or SWP from the campus.

Turning their backs on the campus, no matter what the motivation was, was an act of folly that came close to being suicidal. Students can be reeducated and reoriented toward proletarian tasks and jobs, after they have been recruited -- that is the historic pattern. Ignoring students until after they have gone into industry is a sure way to cut them off from the Marxist movement, which needs the energies of students along with those of workers.

Will the SWP leadership recognize this mistake and correct it? If it doesn't, then I think the future of the SWP and YSA is very uncertain.

Ex-SWP member

WORST MISTAKE OF THE DECADE

Every revolutionary party makes mistakes at certain points in their history. This was true of the Bolshevik Party, the best Marxist party that has existed so far, so we should not expect the SWP to be more perfect in this respect than Lenin's party. People who are waiting for a perfect party to come along will not contribute much to the coming revolution in the U.S.

The way to judge a party is not by seeing if it makes mistakes but by seeing whether it corrects them as soon as possible and learns from them. Breast-beating is of no help, but Leninist self-criticism (which is the opposite of the disgraceful Stalinist caricature of self-criticism) can aid us in finding the healthy way to correct errors, which surely includes being frank and educating the members of the revolutionary party to avoid such errors in the future.

The SWP has made some important mistakes in evaluating the radicalization of the U.S. working class in the last five years, in assessing trends in the Fourth International, etc. These mistakes have been costly, but they can be corrected and partly already are being corrected. But the worst mistake of the decade, in my opinion, was the expulsion and forced resignations of oppositional members, not because they wanted to split, as the leadership charged, but because they wanted the party to retain the program that has been its foundation since its inception in 1938.

I had hoped that the recent convention would correct this mistake, or at least take steps in that direction. But it didn't; to the contrary. This fills me with alarm about the future of the SWP. If there is one thing worse than a mistake, it is a refusal to correct a mistake when it is possible and necessary.

Worried Observer

WHAT CANNON DID NOT FORESEE

In July 1974, a month before his death, James P. Cannon told an interviewer, Sidney Lens, "I don't think we can be isolated again." (See James P. Cannon: A Political Tribute, Pathfinder Press, 1974, p. 42.)

What Cannon meant was that the SWP had learned so much from its recent experiences that the capitalist class and its labor lieutenants would never again succeed in driving the SWP out of the labor and other mass movements as successfully as they did in the 1950s and part of the 1960s.

Whether or not that assessment was correct, it is clear that Cannon did not foresee another possibility -- that the SWP leadership, thanks to a loss of confidence in the working class and in itself, would isolate itself. Anyhow, that is what happened, in my opinion. The SWP leaders have dealt blows to the party and its links with the working class that the capitalists themselves could not have accomplished.

A former SWP member
Detroit, MI

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM IN LIMBO

A friend of mine who still belongs to the SWP told me recently when I asked him something about the Transitional Program that the SWP hasn't used the transitional program for over five years.

I was quite shocked to hear this, because if the transitional program has been discarded it seems to me that this ought to be done formally, with reasons being given, etc.

Can you tell me if maybe I've missed something in the SWP press? Has the SWP rescinded or repudiated the transitional program or major parts of it?

Washington Reader

Ed. reply: No, the SWP has not adopted any statement or resolution changing the position it has had in support of the transitional program since it was first formulated in 1938. But it is quite clear that the SWP leadership is no longer guided by the method of the transitional program in its policies or actions.

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