

Information, Education, Discussion

# **BULLETIN** in Defense of Marxism

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## Who We Are

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published monthly by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. We have dedicated this journal to the process of clarifying the program and theory of revolutionary Marxism — of discussing its application to the class struggle both internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class and of establishing a socialist society based on human need instead of private greed.

The F.I.T. was created in the winter of 1984 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 half a century. Since our formation we have fought to win the party back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective and for our readmission to the SWP. In addition our members are active in the U.S. class struggle.

At the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International, the appeals of the F.I.T. and other expelled members were upheld, and the congress delegates demanded, by an overwhelming majority, that the SWP readmit those who had been purged. So far the SWP has refused to take any steps to comply with this decision.

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

—V.I. Lenin, "The Party Crisis," Jan. 19, 1921.

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## THE DISAGREEMENT WITH LENIN

A Hitherto Unpublished Document by Leon Trotsky

What was the disagreement with Lenin [on the character of the Russian revolution]?

In opposition to falsely interpreted quotations torn out of context, we have presented, above, a more or less coherent, though far from complete, picture of the real development of the views on the character of our revolution and its tendencies. A great deal that is accidental, secondary, and irrelevant got stuck on to this important question, as always happens in a factional struggle, and this tended to cover over and push into the background what is essential and important. All that is inevitable in any struggle. But now, when the dispute has long since receded into the past, we can and must discard the shell in order to get at the kernel of the question.

There was no difference in principle in our assessment of the basic forces of the revolution. This was shown with ample clarity by 1905 and especially by 1917. But there was a difference of political approach. Reduced to its essence, this difference could be formulated as follows: I argued that the victory of the revolution would mean the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin objected that the dictatorship of the

proletariat was one of the possibilities at one of the later stages of the revolution, but that we had yet to pass through the democratic stage, in which the proletariat could be in power only through a coalition with the petty bourgeoisie. To that I replied that our immediate tasks were unquestionably bourgeois-democratic in character and that there could be various stages along the way to the realization of those tasks, with one or another transitional type of power--I didn't deny that--but those transitional forms could only have an episodic character. In order to carry out even the democratic tasks, a dictatorship of the proletariat would be necessary. Without at all trying to leap over the democratic stage, or the natural stages of the class struggle in general, I argued that we should immediately take as our main orientation the conquest of power by the proletarian vanguard. Lenin answered: That is something we would never disavow; we will see how the situation develops, the international situation in particular; but for now we have to put the "three whales" in the forefront and provide a solid basis for the revolutionary coalition of the proletariat and peasantry on the backs of those "three whales."<sup>1</sup>

Between these two ways of posing the question there is a difference, but there is nothing approximating a contradiction. The difference in approach led on occasion to polemics, but they were always incidental and episodic. Lenin's position placed the politically active aspects in the forefront. My position accented or emphasized the broad revolutionary-historical perspective. Here there was a difference of approach, but not a contradiction. This was best seen when the two lines intersected in action. Which is what happened in 1905 and 1917.

One would have to be either extremely limited or extremely dishonest today--after the making of the October revolution--to portray these two points of view as irreconcilable. October 1917 reconciled them very well. The fact that

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This may be the missing fragment of an article written in 1924 and published in The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25) as "Our Differences." It may have been revised in 1927, shortly before Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist International for leading the post-Lenin struggle against the Stalin-Bukharin bureaucracy in control of the CP and the Comintern. It is not known if this fragment was ever used by Trotsky or his opponents from the mid-1920s until 1985, when the leaders of the Socialist Workers Party (U.S.) began to circulate it in several countries in a translation from the Russian made by George Saunders in 1980 with the permission of the Harvard College Library.



Lenin put the democratic stage of the revolution and the program of the "three whales" in the forefront, that he emphasized them in every way and made a polemical point of them, was undeniably correct politically and tactically. And when I spoke of incompleteness and gaps in the so-called theory of "permanent revolution" I had in mind precisely the fact that I simply accepted the democratic stage as something taken for granted, accepted it not only in words but in deeds, as the experience of 1905 shows well enough. But in my theoretical prognoses I did not always maintain a clear, distinct, and fully rounded perspective including all the possible stages of the revolution, and--in particular statements or articles--I might have given the impression at the time when those articles were written that I was "ignoring" the objective democratic tasks and the elemental democratic forces of the revolution, when in fact I simply considered them self-evident and took them for granted. This is proven completely by other works I wrote from other angles or for other purposes. A certain one-sidedness in one or another article on this question over a period of a dozen years (1905-17) amounts to the kind of "bending the stick too far" --to use Lenin's expression--which is absolutely inevitable in any ideological struggle over big questions. This is also the explanation for a polemical response by Lenin here or there, prompted by one or another formulation in a particular article of mine. But in no case were these appropriate to my overall assessment of the revolution or to the nature of my participation in it.

One of my critics, in a vulgarizing way, once attributed to me the thought that not all of Lenin's polemical judgments should be taken at face value but that certain political and pedagogical corrections should be made in them....

In these words there is a grain of truth, as anyone who knows Lenin from his writings will see. But the idea is expressed with exceptional psychological rudeness and crudity. "Lenin made a mountain out of a molehill" [elephant out of a fly]. The same author in another place uses the expression that Lenin defended an idea "foaming at the mouth." Neither foaming at the mouth nor making a mountain out of a molehill is in keeping with the real image of Lenin. Not by any means. On the other hand, these two expressions could not be more in keeping with the image of the person who wrote them.<sup>2</sup> It was said long ago, the style is the man.

In any case, the truth is that

since I did not belong to the Bolshevik faction or, later, to the Bolshevik Party, Lenin was not at all inclined to hunt for opportunities to express agreement with one or another of my views. And if he had to do so on the most important questions, as I have shown, that means that our agreement was so obvious that it demanded to be recognized. On the other hand, on the occasions when Lenin polemicized against me, he by no means sought ways of giving a "fair assessment" of my views; rather he pursued the fighting tasks of the moment --and often enough those did not have to do with me but with one or another group of Bolsheviks, at whom he needed to fire a warning blast on a disputed question.

But however things stood concerning Lenin's old polemics against me on questions of the character of the revolution; and whatever the case on whether I understood Lenin correctly on this question in the past or even whether I understand him correctly now--let us even grant for the moment that I was unable to grasp what is readily comprehensible to Martynov, Slepkov, Rafes, Skvortsov-Stepanov, Kuusinen, and in general to all the Lyadovs, regardless of age or gender<sup>3</sup>--there still remains before us one quite minor, but very thorny, little question: How did it happen that those who never disagreed with Lenin on the basic question of the character of the Russian revolution, who shared his view in full, etc., etc., took such a shamefully opportunist position [when they favored support of the bourgeois Provisional Government in 1917]? To be sure, some only took that position as long as they were left by themselves, but others [persisted] even after Lenin's return to Russia. How could they have taken such a position on the very question on which the ideological life of the party had centered for the preceding twelve years [whether the revolution was to be conducted under the hegemony of the proletariat or under the hegemony of the bourgeois liberals]? That question has to be answered.

That I did not leap over the agrarian-democratic stage of the revolution is proven by solid historical facts and by my whole earlier exposition on this question. [See "Our Differences."] But how was it that my bitterly remorseless critics, at the most important juncture, failed to leap far enough? Was it only because nobody has the capacity to grasp beyond his reach? Such an explanation would be perfectly valid in individual cases. But in this instance we are dealing with a whole layer of the party, educated from 1905 on according to a



certain orientation. Isn't it possible, as a way of softening the political blame, to accept the explanation that Lenin took for granted the possibility of the bourgeois revolution growing over into the socialist revolution and that in the course of the polemic he pushed that historical variant too far into the background and did not go into it sufficiently--not only the theoretical possibility but the profound political probability that the proletariat in Russia would find itself in power earlier than in the advanced capitalist countries?

If his sealed coach had not passed through Germany in March 1917, if Lenin with his group of comrades and, above all, his authority and dynamism, had not arrived in Petrograd at the beginning of April, the October revolution--not in general, as some among us love to speculate, but the particular revolution that happened on October 25, Old Style--that revolution might never have come to pass. As the March [1917] Conference (the minutes of which have not been published to this day)<sup>4</sup> testifies irrefutably, an authoritative group of leading Bolsheviks, or more exactly, a whole layer of the party--instead of adopting Lenin's policy of an unremitting offensive -- would have saddled the party with a policy of "insofar," a policy of division of labor with the Provisional Government, a policy of not frightening off the bourgeoisie, a policy of semi-acceptance of the imperialist war hidden under pacifist manifestos to the peoples of the whole world.

Lenin, after proposing his theses of April 4, ran into accusations of--Trotskyism, no more, no less! What, I ask you, would have happened if to the great misfortune of the Russian revolution Lenin had been cut off from Russia or killed on the way, and the orientation toward an armed uprising and the

dictatorship of the proletariat had been proclaimed to be--something else? What would have happened then? After everything we have gone through in the last few years it is not at all hard to imagine. The initiators of a change of orientation and slogans, that is, the advocates of a course aimed at seizing power, would have become the object of furious denunciation as ultralefts, as Trotskyists, as violators of the traditions of Bolshevism, and--who knows?--as counterrevolutionaries. . . . To be sure, the proletariat would have exerted powerful pressure from below and might have broken through the democratic front here or there, but deprived of a united, farsighted, and audacious leadership, it would have eventually, a month sooner or later, run up against a victorious Kornilovist, Chiang Kai-shekiest, coup.<sup>5</sup> After that a seven-mile-long resolution would have been written, that everything had gone strictly according to the laws of Marx, since the bourgeoisie inherently betrays the proletariat and Bonapartist generals inherently make coups serving the bourgeoisie's interests. Moreover, "we foresaw this all along."

Any attempt to point out to the complacent philistines that their foresight was not worth a tin kopeck, since the task is not to foresee the victory of the bourgeoisie but to ensure the victory of the proletariat, such an attempt would have inspired an additional resolution, to the effect that everything had happened on the basis of the relationship of forces, that the proletariat of backward Russia, especially in the context of the imperialist slaughter, could not leap over historical stages, and that such a program could only be put forward by supporters of permanent revolution, against which Lenin had fought to the last day of his life.

That is how history is now written. And it is made just as badly as it is written. □

## NOTES

1. A popular designation for major planks in the Bolshevik platform--a democratic republic, the eight-hour workday, and confiscation of the landed estates.
2. This is evidently an allusion to Stalin.
3. Supporters of the Stalin-Bukharin bloc in 1927.
4. Trotsky himself later published the revealing March 1917 Conference

minutes in his book The Stalin School of Falsification.

5. Kornilov was a right-wing general who tried to set up a military dictatorship in Russia in 1917. Chiang Kai-shek was a right-wing general who, thanks to the errors of the Stalinized Comintern, succeeded in suppressing the Chinese revolution of 1926-27 and establishing a military dictatorship in China.



## A 'SUPPRESSED' DOCUMENT BY LEON TROTSKY

by Naomi Allen

At a plenum in February 1985, SWP National Committee members and invited guests received a copy of an unpublished article by Leon Trotsky, along with a commentary signed by Steve Clark, as material that would be referred to in the plenum report on the world congress held earlier that month. Clark claimed that the manuscript was "discovered" in the files of Pathfinder Press.

We are printing this document by Trotsky (which may have been written in 1924 and revised or updated in 1927) for two reasons: (1) it is an interesting historical footnote on Trotsky's differences with Lenin before the Russian revolution of 1917 on "permanent revolution" and "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry"; (2) the SWP leaders are circulating it privately as part of a dishonest campaign to discredit two former Pathfinder editors who now belong to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, and impugn their handling of the document.

When the second volume of The Challenge of the Left Opposition was being prepared for publication in the spring of 1980, its editors (George Saunders and I) considered including Trotsky's document. The SWP leaders are now claiming that the editors "suppressed" it because it supposedly throws a favorable light on the SWP leadership's new claims that as late as 1927 Trotsky had acknowledged Lenin to be right about the democratic dictatorship as against permanent revolution; and that his later generalization and defense of permanent

revolution represents an ultraleft, sectarian deviation from a true Leninist course, which even he championed as late as 1927.

In his memorandum to the February plenum, Clark named only "translator George Saunders and someone else" as responsible for the handling of this article. In several private conversations, however, he and other SWP leaders have assigned responsibility to Saunders and George Breitman, another former Pathfinder editor. The fact is that Breitman never saw the article until Clark began circulating it this year with his allegations. The decision not to print it in the Challenge was all mine, as I will explain below. Evidently Clark especially wants to discredit Breitman with this scandal, and never bothered to identify the other handwriting on the manuscript.

### SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLE

In this straightforward little piece, Trotsky summarized the difference of political approach between himself and Lenin in assessing the basic forces of the Russian revolution before it began: Trotsky said a revolutionary victory would require the dictatorship of the proletariat even to carry out the democratic tasks of the revolution; therefore, the main task should be the seizure of power by the proletariat. Lenin said that because democratic tasks were posed, the proletariat could hold power only in coalition with the petty bourgeoisie (the peasantry). Trotsky emphasized that although the two points of view were different, they were not irreconcilable, or even contradictory, as the course of events during the October revolution proved. He said that Lenin was undeniably right to stress the democratic stage of the revolution; he himself simply took that for granted. "But," Trotsky continued, "in my theoretical prognoses I did not always maintain a clear, distinct, and fully rounded perspective including all the possible stages of the revolution, and ... I might have given the impression...that

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Naomi Allen was on the editorial staff of Pathfinder Press and Monad Press from 1971 to 1981. Among the books by Leon Trotsky she edited there were The Challenge of the Left Opposition in three volumes (1923-25, 1926-27, 1928-29) and five volumes of the Writings of Leon Trotsky series. She was expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in a political purge in 1984, for defending the same ideas Trotsky had taught in the books she edited.



I was 'ignoring' the objective democratic tasks and the elemental democratic forces of the revolution, when in fact I simply considered them self-evident and took them for granted." He went on to explain that some polemical exaggerations are inevitable in any struggle, and that history had shown that he did not leap over the agrarian-democratic stage of the revolution in either 1905 or 1917. He wondered whether in the heat of the polemic Lenin didn't err in too much taking for granted the possibility that the democratic revolution would grow over into the socialist revolution. And he concluded with an implied criticism of one aspect of Lenin's logic: Because the party ranks were educated without regard for that possibility, the October revolution might never have happened without the person of Lenin to lead it. Without Lenin, Trotsky said, those who advocated the seizure of power would have been vilified as Trotskyists, even counter-revolutionaries.

Clark's interest in this article stems from Trotsky's apparent acknowledgment that his theory of permanent revolution, by stressing the need to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, was incomplete and contained gaps; that he might have been guilty of seeming to "ignore" the objective democratic tasks and forces of the revolution; that Lenin was "undeniably correct" in putting the democratic stage and tasks in the forefront and emphasizing them.

### TROTSKY'S REAL POSITION

But is this acknowledgment what Clark pretends it to be -- a freely offered assessment of the historical record that represents Trotsky's considered opinion on the subject? And is it actually new?

If we are discussing Trotsky's ideas on, for example, the role of the vanguard party as Lenin saw it, we could quote what he said in his 1904 pamphlet Our Political Tasks. In 1904 Trotsky considered the Leninist party to be haughty elitism, substituting a vanguard for the working class itself. His ideas on this matter changed dramatically, however. He joined Lenin's party in 1917, became its most dedicated partisan and defender, and spent the rest of his life trying to establish Leninist parties throughout the world. It would hardly be accurate to characterize Trotsky's views on democratic centralism by his 1904 essay alone.

Trotsky originally put forward his theory of permanent revolution as a theory only for the revolution in Russia. In the initial stages of his campaign against Stalinism, in 1923-25, he was eager to win the ear of the party members, many of whom remembered Lenin's prerevolutionary polemics against permanent revolution. Because he felt that the issue had been settled by history, he did not see the point in allowing the party bureaucracy to use permanent revolution to discredit him personally and to distract the party's attention from his criticisms of the current policies of the new Soviet bureaucracy. Under attack by the Stalinists, he was willing to say that permanent revolution was an academic question and to consign it to the archives. In "Lessons of October" (September 1924) and in "Our Differences" (November 1924) Trotsky defended himself and his ideas, but insisted that the dispute over permanent revolution was outlived by history. He specifically repudiated the notion that Lenin had realized the incorrectness of his own formula and adopted Trotsky's.

In 1926-27, the events in China interposed themselves into the inner-party debate in the Soviet Union. Trotsky became convinced that the Chinese workers could take power despite all the conventional wisdom relegating colonial countries to indeterminate periods of capitalist development. But in this period, Trotsky had entered into a bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev to defeat the Stalinists on key questions of international and domestic communist policy, and he had to subordinate his ideas on permanent revolution in order to try to hold the United Opposition bloc together against the major danger represented by the Stalin-Bukharin bloc. He repeatedly dismissed attempts to revive the debate and even explicitly stated that permanent revolution, to the extent that it differed from Lenin's conception, was wrong.

What all these statements have in common with the article before us now is that they were all issued under some form of duress: duress created by a dishonest campaign by the Stalinists to discredit him and to distract attention from the contested issues, or duress created by an alliance with elements who refused to consider permanent revolution even while events were demonstrating its relevance. The only "new" thing about this so-called self-criticism is that, as far as we know, it was not published -- precisely because, unlike Trotsky's other forced self-criticisms, it didn't



contain anything new that the Stalinists could use.

In July-August 1927, around the time Trotsky was writing or rewriting this article, the United Opposition with Zinoviev and Kamenev was coming under severe strain. The Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the party held a plenum, at which a motion was introduced to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev from the CC, and the Stalinists continued to try to drive a wedge between Trotsky and his allies among the Old Bolsheviks. The Zinovievists were in a panic. Thirteen leaders of the Opposition signed a statement on August 8 at the demand of the Stalinists, and partly written by them, disavowing views attributed to the Opposition by the Stalinists (see Challenge, vol. 2, pp. 291-95).

Trotsky was making a last-ditch effort to steady the Zinovievists, who were on the brink of capitulation to Stalin; to mollify them and to provide ammunition against Stalin's argument that they had capitulated ideologically to "Trotskyism." He was attempting to find what to them would be the most palatable formulation possible of his differences with Lenin, without actually repudiating his own ideas, so that the Zinovievists would not collapse under pressure from the Stalinists. To do this, it seems likely that he went back to his 1924 text, "Our Differences," and removed the eight manuscript pages that followed Chapter 6 (see Challenge, vol. 1, p. 259). Those pages were missing in the archive copy deposited at Harvard after Trotsky's death. He may have reworked those pages to use during the debate at the plenum in the summer of

1927. This would explain his unelaborated reference at the very beginning of the article to something that preceded these pages. Naturally, he updated them to include references to current events in China.

This is the document that the SWP leadership of today cites as evidence of Trotsky's actual position on the disputed questions--a fragment produced under fantastic pressure from the Stalinists, on the one hand, and his Zinovievist allies, on the other; a fragment which was part of a strategy above all to avoid a rupture over what was still, to Trotsky, a historical question, so as to preserve an Opposition on urgent questions of domestic and international politics. Within a few months, the Zinovievists would desert the United Opposition and seek sanctuary in the Stalinist fold; and events in China would convince Trotsky that his theory of permanent revolution had a relevance beyond Russia alone.

For the next twelve years, until his death in 1940 at the hands of a Stalinist assassin, Trotsky wrote unambiguously on the subject of permanent revolution and the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. He began as soon as he was exiled to Alma-Ata in 1928 with a defense of permanent revolution against Radek and other critics within the Opposition. This formed part of his important pamphlet Permanent Revolution, which was published while he was in exile in Turkey in 1930. He explained the pertinence of permanent revolution in his extensive writings on China, now in Leon Trotsky on China. It would fill an entire page just to list the many articles he wrote



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about permanent revolution in the last decade of his life. His most fully developed exposition of the theory, along with his explanation of how it differed from Lenin's theory and from the Menshevik line, is in "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution," written a year before his death, and printed in Writings 1939-40 and Stalin, his posthumous biography of the Soviet dictator.

The SWP leaders have remained silent about Trotsky's writings on this subject during his final twelve years. Are they claiming that this final, mature, and least pressured writing on the subject should not be considered his real position, and that that real position is represented by a fragment, produced under pressure, and possibly never used by him in any form?

#### WHY WE OMITTED THIS DOCUMENT

Unlike the 14-volume Trotsky Writings series (1929-40), in which we tried to include virtually all of Trotsky's articles, letters, statements, etc., that were not actually carbon copies of each other, the Challenge series was much more restrictive in its selection. We were limited to three volumes for the entire period from 1923 to Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1929. The supply of material, mostly housed in Trotsky's archives at Harvard, was vast. And it was almost all in Russian. An initial selection, based on thumbnail summaries by translator George Saunders, was made early in the editing process. First priority was given to items that had to our knowledge at one time been published, either in Russia or abroad; documents that had obviously figured prominently in the struggle with Stalin or in the debate within the Opposition itself; or pieces that were cited or partly quoted by historians but not actually available.

Time was also a factor in the selection process. The book had a tight production schedule, Saunders was involved in translating material for several other Pathfinder and Monad books by Trotsky and others during the period he was also working on this volume. And because he worked on a volunteer basis, he also had to devote some time to commercial projects that would pay a fee. Thus, there were built-in limits to what could be used.

Long after the book had gone into production, translations continued arriving from Comrade Saunders, who urged that they be either somehow squeezed in, or saved and used in the International

Socialist Review or in a subsequent collection on the subject of Trotsky's historic struggle with Stalinism. The present item was among those that arrived too late to be included in the second volume of the Challenge. The last step, the editor's introduction, was written in April 1980, at the same time that this translation arrived. The book actually came off the press a few months later.

#### WHO WAS REALLY SUPPRESSING INFORMATION?

Clark and his cohorts are spreading the story that we attempted to suppress something that would be damning to partisans of permanent revolution and critics of the democratic dictatorship. But why would such partisans and critics seek to suppress material, even if we grant for a moment that it did represent a new formulation by Trotsky? In 1980 there was no opposition in the party to the anti-permanent revolution course of the leadership, precisely because there was no visible sign that such a course was under way. At the time, we didn't know what the Barnes group was saying and planning about the party's program behind the party's back. Why would people suppress an article in the interests of a factional struggle they didn't even know was taking place?\*

During the pre-convention discussion of 1981 (in an article signed by none other than Steve Clark), the SWP Political Committee assured party members that no rethinking of the validity of permanent revolution was under way. Of course, Clark recently admitted that this was a lie--at the August 1985 Oberlin educational conference and convention he acknowledged that he had personally changed his mind about the validity of permanent revolution as far back as 1979 as a result of the Nicaraguan revolution. But in April 1980 we had no way of knowing that this was secretly going on and thus no reason to anticipate that Trotsky's words, produced under hostile

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\*The only hint I had that something was beginning to rot was a sudden and unexpected summons from the National Office to review and make changes in the introduction to the second volume of Challenge after the entire book had been finished and set in type. I have described this strange experience in an article entitled "Through the Looking Glass with Barnes and Sheppard" in Bulletin IDOM, No. 14, Dec. 1984.



pressure, would some day become a banner for a leadership intent on discrediting everything Trotsky stood for and should therefore be suppressed from publication.

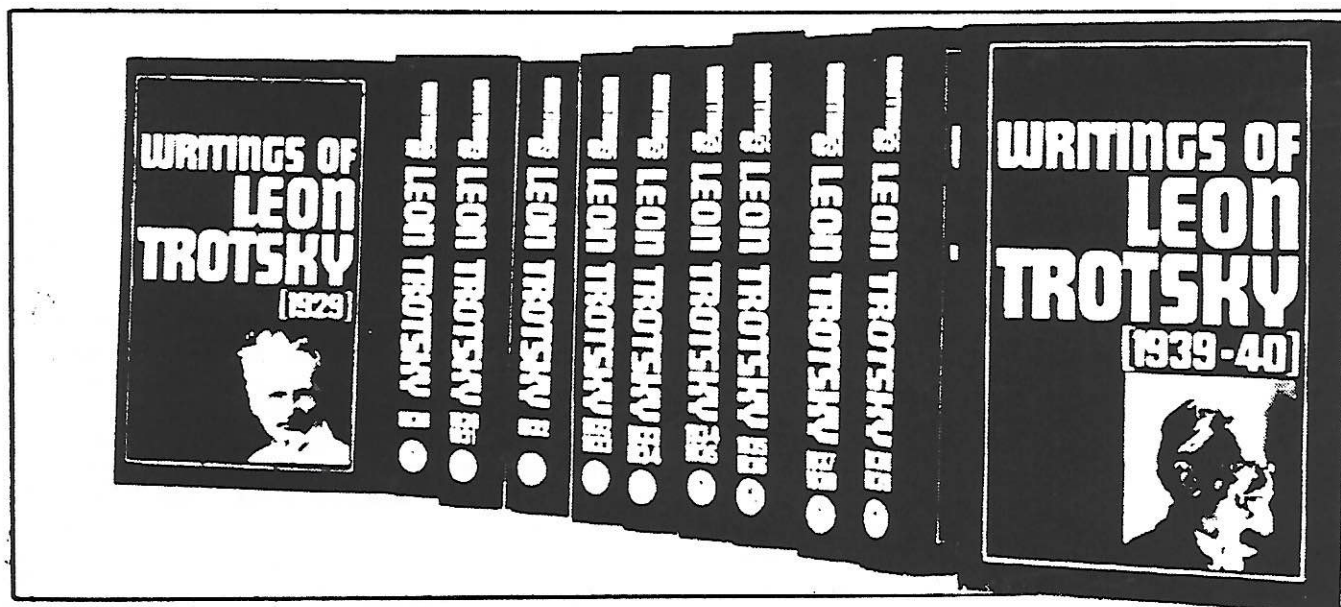
In 1982, even after the Barnes-Clark leadership's new line became evident, Saunders wrote to Clark about Trotsky materials that might be used in the then forthcoming new theoretical magazine (New International, which first appeared in 1983). Saunders, who was then still a member of the Pathfinder staff and of the SWP, informed Clark that there were a number of Trotsky translations that the editors had not been able to include in the three-volume Challenge series, and suggested they might be used in New International, offering to help prepare them for publication. Saunders never heard from Clark again -- until January 1984, when Clark notified him he had been expelled from the SWP. It was probably Saunders's letter that prompted Clark and others to look through the files at Pathfinder and "discover" this document. But why would Saunders and I have filed this translation at Pathfinder if we had intended to "suppress" it? And why would Saunders then have informed Clark about the many unpublished Trotsky articles in the Pathfinder files if we wanted to suppress it?

For factional reasons the SWP leadership is trying to discredit the Pathfinder team that did so much in the 1970s to make available a great many of Trotsky writings of the 1920s and 1930s, that were previously unavailable, including what he wrote during those years

about permanent revolution and the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. This shows how low the current SWP leaders are willing to sink in order to score some factional points.

But nothing they write or say will be able to obscure the historic importance of that publishing project, brought to completion just as Barnes began to "reassess" Trotsky and his ideas and to rewrite the history of the Russian revolution. Above all, nothing can tarnish the exceptional contributions of George Saunders, Trotsky's foremost English-language translator, who set new standards of excellence in the quality and quantity of work he did in the 1970s. Destroying his well-earned reputation in this field is just a trifle in the eyes of the Steve Clarks and other cadre-killers.

By accusing us of trying to suppress this article, Clark is clumsily trying to rewrite party history: the dozens of members expelled and driven from the party in 1983 and 1984 have been cynically dubbed "splitters"; now, through an ill-conceived slander, whose purpose was to get a cheap shot at two prominent expellees (while keeping the attack secret, so the accused could not defend themselves), Clark unintentionally extended the dispute in the Socialist Workers Party back in time, to a period when only his faction, the Barnes leadership, was aware of their plans to undermine the party's program. He only succeeded in further exposing his own role in the conspiracy to defraud the party that began as far back as 1979. □



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# THE FIGHT FOR A FREE SOUTH AFRICA

## The Need for Revolutionary Leadership

by Tom Barrett

History will remember 1985 as the year of South Africa. The oppressed Blacks, Asians, and Coloureds of that racist prisonhouse have already permanently altered the political landscape of the continent. Black workers and Black youth have embarked on a course of struggle, and they will not be turned away from it without winning complete political equality. They have inspired active international support of the kind which helped the Vietnamese win independence; in the United States this support has focused on the demand that U.S. corporations stop doing business in South Africa and that the government impose sanctions against the apartheid regime. Students have organized mass protests demanding that their universities divest themselves of the securities of companies which do business in South Africa. Important mass demonstrations involving labor have already occurred; more are planned.

In all likelihood the institutionalized racial oppression known as apartheid will not survive the present crisis. On September 29 leading figures of the South African bourgeoisie called on President Botha and his government to abolish apartheid. In full-page South African newspaper advertisements headlined "There is a better way," they called for the abolition of apartheid and negotiations with "acknowledged black leaders" on sharing power. Executives of some of the most significant South African and multinational corporations signed the advertisements, including Harry Oppenheimer, the head of DeBeers Consolidated Mines, J.G. Douglas, chairman of South African General Electric, and the heads of South African subsidiaries of Toyota, Kodak, Hewlett-Packard, BMW, Coca-Cola Export, Colgate-Palmolive, Mobil, General Motors, Citibank, and Volkswagen. The signers were from both the English- and Afrikaans-speaking white communities and represented those who have been profiting the most from apartheid over the years.

The U.S. ruling class and the Reagan administration have been embarrassed into taking their distance from the Botha regime. Reagan himself has been

forced to call the apartheid system "repugnant" and to call on Botha to change it. With the exception of ultra-right personalities on the ideological fringe of the Republican Party, such as fund-raiser Richard Viguerie and preacher Jerry Falwell, the U.S. bourgeoisie and its political representatives have concluded that apartheid has outlived its usefulness and has become a danger to continued capitalist rule -- and profits -- in South Africa. While they would obviously prefer to deal with moderate leaders such as Rt. Rev. Desmond Tutu or Zulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, many have called for negotiations with the African National Congress (ANC) and for the release of ANC leader Nelson Mandela.

Furthermore, many corporations are not waiting for mass protests to sell off their investments in South Africa. Clearly, those holdings are threatened by the developing revolution, which ultimately cannot be defeated in a head-on clash. The restoration of political stability in South Africa is the primary concern of Reagan and the U.S. ruling class, and many in that class are not optimistic.

It may be concluded, then, that a tremendous victory is on the horizon for the workers and oppressed people of the entire world. Apartheid will be abolished; the fact that apartheid may be abolished without wresting state power from the bourgeoisie does not diminish the fact that it is a victory. Revolutionary Marxists support the struggle to end apartheid unconditionally. We support the struggle no matter who is leading it, no matter what programmatic limitations it may have, no matter what class forces are involved in it. The September 29 newspaper advertisements do not cause us to throw up our hands and complain that "the bourgeoisie has co-opted the struggle"; rather, we see it as a retreat forced on the bourgeoisie by the Black struggle. The continued mobilization of Black South Africans, especially the workers on whom the economy depends, such as the miners, is a real threat to continued class rule, even though that question is as yet not



consciously posed. The fight for democratic rights in South Africa can grow into socialist revolution, and for this reason the capitalist class is ready to sacrifice apartheid before the struggle gets out of hand.

## DEMOCRACY AND REVOLUTION

The relationship between democratic struggle and socialist revolution is not simple and linear. One does not automatically grow out of the other. The fall of apartheid will be a tremendous victory for South African Blacks, but it will not totally end their oppression. That goal remains ahead. It is undeniable that the abolition of apartheid is a giant step toward total liberation of the South African people; it is also true that in the case of South Africa there can be no struggle for socialism without the struggle against apartheid. However, the struggle against apartheid is not in and of itself a struggle for socialism.

If socialist revolution is to grow out of a national liberation movement it must be led. The intervention of a conscious socialist leadership is absolutely necessary. History has given us examples of leaders who came to socialist conclusions in the course of the struggle and led the national liberation movement to its next level. Fidel Castro is the prime example. However, revolutionary socialists cannot depend on a nationalist leader of Castro's caliber coming to the fore. The best answer to the question of revolutionary leadership is the building of a Leninist party on the foundation of a Marxist program. This is the answer offered by the Fourth International. A revolutionary party would participate in the national liberation struggle and seek to gain influence and leadership in order to bring about its victory. It would be able to continue the fight beyond the achievement of national democratic goals toward class liberation.

Such a party does not exist in South Africa today; it is of no use to pretend that it does. The African National Congress, the most influential group in the Black struggle at the present time, is not a substitute for that party. It does not have a program which goes beyond national liberation or democratic demands. Neither is it programmatically equipped to lead the African masses forward in the post-apartheid period ahead. Its dedication to African freedom is unquestionable. But that in and of itself may prove to be insufficient.

Furthermore, a debate is currently going on among Black South Africans on the direction in which the national liberation movement should go. The ANC is an important organization, but by no means the only organization vying for leadership of South Africa's oppressed national majority. Peter Blumer, in the September 30, 1985, issue of International Viewpoint, writes: "Within South Africa, the ANC, which presents itself as the national liberation movement, has an extensive network of activists and active sympathizers, who work in the community organizations and in the trade-union movement.... But it has not yet succeeded in winning the leadership of the process of organization that is going on in the industrial working class." Other organizations, such as the National Forum, are also contributing their ideas to the debate in the liberation movement and are contending for leadership.

Consequently, the endorsement by revolutionary socialists of any particular national democratic leadership is of little service to the South African people. However, the August 30, 1985, issue of the Militant gives uncritical endorsement to the African National Congress. This is out of place. The democratic demands of the ANC's Freedom Charter are good ones for agitation, for building a mass movement. But demands are not a substitute for a political program which addresses the reality of class rule and offers a strategy for replacing it. The Freedom Charter should be put forward; its demands should be the basis for mass action. But the editors of the Militant should know better than to hold out the false hope that they are enough. The ANC is a nationalist organization, committed to building a national liberation movement. It is doing that. However, the Socialist Workers Party is committed to building a revolutionary socialist movement. By endorsing the leadership of the ideologically nationalist ANC the SWP contributes nothing to the building of a revolutionary Leninist party in South Africa.

At one time the Socialist Workers Party understood the difference between unconditional support to people in struggle and support to its leadership. The SWP correctly argued in the 1960s against endorsing the leadership of the Vietnamese Stalinists; in 1970 against those who called on it to endorse the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; and in 1976 against those who called for support to the People's Movement for the Liberation of



Angola (MPLA). The party did not spend a great deal of time and energy criticizing those organizations, nor should it have. The important thing was to build support for the ongoing revolutionary movements and, when appropriate, to express constructive ideas on how best to build those movements and speed their victory.

#### POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA — A QUESTION TO BE FACED NOW

There is little use in speculating on what kind of compromise might be reached on ending apartheid, or even on whether or not one will be reached. What is undeniable is that the inner circles of the ruling class in all the advanced industrial countries are desperately trying to come up with a plan which can save their rule in South Africa. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, on October 2, said as much. He said that apartheid was "doomed" and called on Blacks not to turn to an alternative "worse than apartheid," by which, of course, Shultz meant socialist revolution. Some of the leaders of the anti-apartheid struggle will have to play a role in a compromise if it is to succeed, and some of them have already expressed willingness to do so. The national liberation movement will have to face several issues as the struggle moves into a post-apartheid period.

First of all, imperialism's stake in South Africa should never be underestimated. It commands the oil-shipping routes from its position at the intersection of the Indian and South Atlantic oceans. Its natural resources and industrial base are vitally important. The amount of money invested by Western banks and multinational corporations is far too much to be written off.

Secondly, Black leaders in South Africa are not united. Gatsha Buthelezi, the leader of South Africa's largest tribe, the Zulus, is strongly anticommunist and has organized physical attacks against ANC activists. The ANC since its founding in 1912 has devoted itself to ending tribal antagonisms; nevertheless, they remain, and the capitalist class will continue its efforts to exacerbate them. Until power is taken away from the capitalists, ending tribal hostilities may not be possible. And one may depend on Buthelezi to continue to defend capitalist power. Bishop Tutu and Allan Boesak (a Coloured minister of the Dutch Reformed church and leader of the United Democratic Front) also have a great deal of influence and are strongly

committed to compromise rather than revolution.

Thirdly, the ANC itself is strongly influenced by Stalinism. It is committed to a stagist concept of the South African revolution -- a national democratic revolution now, whose class content is explicitly not proletarian. It has said very little about socialist revolution except to argue against it. A polemic against the National Forum in the July and August, 1985, issues of its journal Sechaba quotes Nelson Mandela: "[The Freedom Charter] is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis. Under socialism the workers hold state power. They and the peasants own the means of production, the land, the factories, and the mills. All production is for use and not for profit. The Charter does not contemplate such profound economic and political changes." Further, the same article states, "...the political situation in South Africa does not by any means make the question of the socialist revolution the immediate task of the struggle.... Our immediate aim is to win the objectives of the national revolution expressed in the Freedom Charter...." (Reprinted in International Viewpoint, September 30, 1985, p. 16ff.) One can only speculate what the ANC will do to prevent "profound economic and political changes." It can hardly be relied on to advance proletarian interests -- which require "profound economic and political changes" -- after apartheid has ceased to exist.

#### SOUTH AFRICA AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

What is needed in South Africa is a revolutionary party, built on the foundation of a Marxist program, the program of the Fourth International. What Fourth Internationalists do throughout the world, not only within South Africa, will have a big effect on that process.

By building mass action in opposition to apartheid the Fourth International can earn respect for its contribution to the defeat of that racist regime. Mass action can best be organized through nonexclusionary united fronts whose purpose is to bring the power of the working class and its allies to bear against those who would stand in the way of Black freedom.

By informing working-class militants throughout the world of the issues in debate in South Africa and by constructively contributing its own ideas the Fourth International can influence



the discussion in a positive way. It can win South African fighters to a revolutionary Marxist perspective and begin the process of building a party which can lead the South African workers and their allies to socialist revolution.

Precisely the opposite course is being followed by the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. Rather than contributing positive ideas to the general debate on perspectives in South Africa it has given its uncritical endorsement to the ANC. Such a policy hin-

ders the process of building a revolutionary party, both in South Africa and the United States. What is needed in both countries is a party which will fight alongside the oppressed masses at whatever their level of consciousness and carry out concrete work designed to raise people's understanding and convince them of the necessity of socialist revolution, growing into the mass party which can lead the working class in making that revolution. □

## **BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS FROM THE F.I.T.**

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# UNITED SECRETARIAT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS SWP'S REFUSAL TO CARRY OUT WORLD CONGRESS MOTIONS

by Steve Bloom

At a meeting held on September 30-October 5, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International took up the refusal by the August 1985 SWP convention to carry out the motions adopted at the last world congress of the Fourth International. These motions demanded the readmission of members expelled from the SWP for their political views. Starting in 1982, the present SWP leadership carried out a purge of the organization--getting rid of anyone whom they suspected of opposition to their attempt to transform the historic program of the party.

In late 1983 and early 1984, two organizations of the expelled were formed--Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. In January 1985, after exhausting their appeals to the SWP, the members of S.A. and F.I.T. took their case to the world congress. In a series of motions, the congress delegates overwhelmingly upheld their appeals, recognized members of S.A. and F.I.T. as members of the FI to the extent that this is compatible with U.S. law, and demanded that the SWP readmit us to the party.

Since the world congress, however, the SWP leaders have taken no steps whatever to comply with this demand--or even to begin to reduce the factional atmosphere they have whipped up against the expelled. At the last convention of the party, motions were adopted which specifically rejected doing so. This laid the basis for the most recent deliberations by the leadership of the Fourth International.

At the United Secretariat meeting, a resolution was adopted condemning the SWP's actions. It declared that as a consequence of the decisions made by the party itself, the FI has no choice but to continue its formal ties with four groups in the U.S.--the SWP (which would be the section of the FI in this country except for reactionary legislation which prohibits U.S. citizens from formally affiliating to international organizations), and three groups whose members ought to be readmitted to the SWP: the F.I.T., S.A., and Socialist Unity (a group that was formed recently after a

split in S.A.). The final text of the United Secretariat statement is still in the process of preparation. We plan to publish it in the next issue of the Bulletin IDOM.

Another motion adopted by the United Secretariat was to prepare materials documenting the SWP's refusal to comply with the world congress decisions. These will be circulated internationally to FI members through their national sections. A proposal was also made for the establishment of more normal fraternal relations between the SWP and the organizations of the expelled in the U.S.A.--relations which would be consistent with common membership in the same world movement--even if the SWP continues to refuse to readmit us.

Among the other agenda items taken up by the United Secretariat meeting was a second item relating to the organizational crisis of the Fourth Internationalist movement in this country: the recent split in Socialist Action and the formation of Socialist Unity. The decision of the USec, as already mentioned, was to recognize the reality that this meant four organized groups of Fourth Internationalists in the U.S., and S.U. will have the same status for the present as the F.I.T. and S.A.

The relationship of S.U. to the FI, along with the entire organizational situation in the U.S. including any further steps with regard to the SWP, will be taken up again by a meeting of the International Executive Committee which is now scheduled to take place in February.

An important political debate, which promises to shed considerable light on the continued evolution of the pro-U.S. SWP faction within our world movement, was begun at this United Secretariat meeting around South Africa. The South African revolution poses squarely all of the problems of permanent revolution which the SWP leadership has attempted to ignore, or define away, through its false notion of the "workers' and farmers' government" and "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." The South Africa debate cannot take place just around abstract



theoretical categories. It will require an analysis of real class forces in a concrete situation.

Written positions on the South African question are still in the process of being clearly formulated. A draft resolution was adopted by the United Secretariat meeting, which will be published after editing. We will also look

forward to a written presentation of the opposing view presently being championed by the U.S. SWP. A major debate in the FI around the problem of the South African revolution can be an important next step toward carrying out the necessary programmatic struggle in defense of revolutionary Marxism within the Fourth International. □

## IN RESPONSE TO THE SWP'S CHARGE CONCERNING 'FRAUDULENT' USE OF PARTY NAME

Statement adopted by F.I.T. National Organizing Committee

September 8, 1985

1) At the February 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International, a motion was adopted with the full support and agreement of the delegates from Socialist Action (which included two who later became founders of Socialist Unity) and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. It read, "The World Congress strongly urges all Fourth Internationalists in the United States to refrain from the use of any terminology that could, in the considered opinion of the organizations concerned, in any way jeopardize the ongoing fight for full legal rights that confronts all revolutionists in the United States. In accord with this, no Fourth Internationalists will in the future refer to themselves as a 'public faction' of any other organization of Fourth Internationalists in the U.S.

"This is in accordance with the organizational status of S.A. and F.I.T. decided upon by the adoption of the motion on the organizational situation from the commission majority."

2) In a report adopted by the August 1985 convention of the Socialist Workers Party and in the August 16 issue of the Militant newspaper, a charge was made against the groups which have been formed by expelled members of the SWP. It is alleged that we have "fraudulently" used the party name, and that in so doing we have committed a provocation against the SWP. The basis for this

accusation is that Socialist Action initially called itself a "public faction" of the party, and that F.I.T. and S.U. have in one way or another referred to separate tendencies or currents that should be seen as legitimate parts of the SWP.

Since the world congress efforts have been made to carry out the motion quoted above. Socialist Action has ceased referring to itself as a public faction (the F.I.T. never did). F.I.T. edited the final text of a report which had been objected to by the SWP leadership so that it no longer urged the Fourth International to "state that ... all those who have been expelled remain members of the party," but instead asked that the Fourth International establish relations with the expelled "as if they were still members of the party" (emphasis added). Despite the many leaflets, pamphlets, and publications put out by the three organizations of the expelled since the world congress, the SWP itself only claims to have found one "transgression," the single sentence from an internal S.U. document, taken out of context in order to be quoted in the August 16 Militant.

3) None of the three organizations has made any legal claim on the name of the SWP, or taken any other legal action of any kind against the party. None of our members have ever spoken--in public or in private--and claimed to be members



of the SWP, or to be representatives of the SWP or its present political views. We have always defended the SWP against those who try to attack it, or threaten its legality, through any and all legal channels; and we will continue to do so.

We have, however, attempted to discuss what we consider to be a political reality resulting from the unilateral imposition of a split on the SWP by the Barnes leadership. This has been our purpose in applying the terminology which the SWP leadership has objected to. We have always made clear the specific content intended for these formulations. We believe this has been understandable to any ordinary reader of our press. We have never made any of the exaggerated claims which the SWP leadership attributes to us in its attacks.

4) Nevertheless, we wish to avoid any unnecessary problems and difficulties in relations between ourselves and the SWP. We will continue to carry out the world congress decision and refrain from formulations that "in the considered opinion of the organizations concerned, in any way jeopardize the ongoing fight for full legal rights that confronts all revolutionists in the United States." Since this issue apparently reflects the "considered opinion" of the SWP, we will urge all Fourth Internationalists in the United States to refrain from explaining the present organizational situation of our movement here in terms of separate currents that are legitimately part of the SWP. We will, instead, refer to the division of the Fourth Internationalist movement into separate currents in the

U.S.--a formulation which has, in our view, the same political content, but avoids the legal problem raised by the SWP.

5) We believe that this action on our part should resolve the difficulty cited by the party leadership. It is our understanding that at the August 1985 SWP convention, the sole basis for continuing the policy of excluding members of our organizations from public functions of the party was this issue of the alleged "fraudulent use" of the SWP's name. We urge the SWP leadership to show good faith by now withdrawing its exclusionary policy, and taking other steps which can reduce the factional atmosphere and restore normal relations between the party and other Fourth Internationalists in the U.S.

We also note that it would be far more effective for the party leadership, in the future, to raise any similar problems directly with the expelled groups, rather than making a factional issue of it at their convention or in the press. Had they done so in the present case we would certainly have attempted to resolve things in a comradely and mutually satisfactory manner. We urge the SWP leadership to alter its policy of refusing to communicate with us or answer our correspondence. The SWP has the responsibility above all, as the largest component of the movement in the United States in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, to act in a way that can lead toward a resolution of the present crisis of our movement in this country. □





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# 'INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT' SPECIAL BOOK PUBLISHES ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF WORLD CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS

## Resolutions of the Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International

### Introduction by I.V. Editors

THE TWELFTH World Congress of the Fourth International took place in January 1985. It brought together some 200 delegates, fraternal delegates, observers, and invited guests.

Six reports were on the agenda:

- On the world political situation, taking up the development and effects of the crisis in the different sectors of the world revolution, the struggle against austerity measures and the war drive, and the activities and central campaigns of the International and its sections.
- On the lessons and perspectives of the Central American revolution, which set out to draw out the strategic lessons of the Nicaraguan revolution and give the present framework for the campaign against imperialist intervention and in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The discussion centered particularly on the nature of the Sandinista regime, on its economic policy, and the present situation of the Salvadorean revolution.
- On the political revolution and counterrevolution in Poland, the most important experience of a mass upsurge against the bureaucracy, taking up the gains made by Solidarnosc and the tasks of the resistance to the Jaruzelski regime.

Aside from these three discussions, concerning the principal questions in the international situation today, two others took up more general programmatic questions:

- The first, on the present relevance of the theory of permanent revolution and the notion of the workers and farmers government, reaffirmed the validity of the general programmatic framework of the Fourth International, in the light of the main events of the class struggle.
- The second, entitled "Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy," continued and closed a discussion initiated by the previous world congress. It brought together in a systematic way the lessons of the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers states and the anti-bureaucratic struggles, the relationship between revolutionary power and democracy (relations between parties, trade unions, and states after the revolution, guarantees of democratic rights, pluralism, the functional character of democracy from the point of view of economic planning, and other questions).

Finally, a written and oral report on the present stage of building the Fourth International laid out our tasks and perspectives for the years ahead, taking up in particular the relations that the International and its sections have with other revolutionary currents, the social transformation of the sections and their implantation in the key industrial sectors and popular movements, and the functioning of the leadership bodies of the International as such.

There were counterreports on all these points, either from the declared international tendencies (of which there were two), or by delegates representing the majority of their respective sections. The documents presented by the outgoing United Secretariat were all approved by a large majority, from 66 to 80 percent of the votes, on the different points.

The congress also received written reports from the outgoing leadership on its activity as a whole, and on its policy of cadre formation. A substantial part of the work of the congress was devoted to meetings and reports of commissions studying the situation of certain sections. After the report of the Mandates Commission, five new sections of the International were recognized by the congress (Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Senegal, Iceland), as well as new sympathizing groups in several countries. In total, the International exists today in some fifty countries.

At the end of its work, the congress elected the new International Executive Committee (IEC), reduced in size from previously in order to improve its functioning and regularity. The IEC itself elected the new United Secretariat. The IEC, composed of members from 27 sections, and the United Secretariat (composed of members from 12 sections at present, it is up for re-election at each IEC meeting) are charged with leading the International until the next world congress. Opening with a tribute to comrades who have died since the last world congress, the Twelfth Congress of the Fourth International closed with a declaration of solidarity with all militants and fighters of the anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic struggles throughout the world. In addition to the general resolutions, it adopted a series of solidarity declarations with the struggle of the Kanak people of New Caledonia, the British miners' strike, the antiwar mobilizations around 20 April in the United States, the freedom struggle of the Irish people, political prisoners in Syria, and our imprisoned comrades in Japan (for these declarations see *International Viewpoint*, Nos. 70/71/72, 25 February, 11/25 March 1985).

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# OPEN LETTER TO THE U.S. ANTI-INTERVENTION MOVEMENT

## EMERGENCY NATIONAL COUNCIL Against U.S. Intervention In Central America/The Caribbean

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JOHN O'NEIL, *Member, Witness for Peace*

BARBARA RUDQUIST, *Secretary, MN Coalition to Prevent Repressive Federal Legislation (MCPFL)*

MARY SCULLY, *Member, Boston Central America Solidarity Association/Member, IUE Local 201*

RITA SHAIN, *Co-chair, Northwest Action for Peace, Jobs & Justice/BRAC Local 1380/Member, Puget Sound Coalition of Labor Union Women*

MICHAEL SNELL FEIKEMA, *Planning Committee, Iowa Campaign to Stop the U.S. War in Central America*

FRANCES TAYLOR, *Member, PA State Educ. Assoc./NEA Committee on Central America*

PAUL TIERNEY, *Steering Committee, Toledo Area Committee on Central America*

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*All titles and affiliations for identification purposes only.*

October 2, 1985

### AN OPEN LETTER TO THE U.S. ANTI-INTERVENTION MOVEMENT

Dear Friends:

We are writing to your organization and to others around the country concerning a matter of critical importance to the U.S. anti-intervention movement. It is the need to take concrete steps now to unify the movement in the face of ever more dangerous U.S. military moves in Central America and the Caribbean.

As you well know, the U.S. government is actively seeking to engineer a war against Nicaragua. The Reagan administration hopes that its operations in Honduras will pave the way for direct massive U.S. military intervention to overthrow the Sandinista government. Meanwhile the contra war expands, the air war against the Salvadoran people intensifies, support for the Guatemalan and Honduran dictatorships increases, and Costa Rica is forced to militarize.

The question for us in the U.S. anti-intervention movement is what can we do now to stop the government's step-by-step escalation.

There is a tremendous amount of protest activity taking place all across the country in the form of rallies, demonstrations, meetings, forums, mailings, tours to Central America, tours by Central American trade unionists and others to the United States, material aid campaigns, vigils, and teach-ins. This kind of grass roots activity at the local level has helped lay the foundation for a nationally unified and coordinated anti-intervention movement.

To bring this kind of movement into being, we urge the immediate establishment of a national anti-intervention coalition. Those organizations which have led the fight against U.S. policies in Central America and the Caribbean over the past years can make a crucial contribution now to that struggle by helping to launch such a coalition.

The need for national unity of the anti-intervention movement is evident. The Reagan administration has been able to escalate U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean because a united anti-intervention movement of sufficient breadth, depth, power and militancy to stop it has



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yet to be organized. Congress is Reagan's partner in the increasingly aggressive U.S. military policies, as witness its vote for contra aid and its approval of huge appropriations for the Duarte regime.

There is grave cause for concern. Visible public opposition to interventionist U.S. policies is less now than six months ago at the time of the April demonstrations. Newsweek magazine (9/9/85) reports that while its April 1985 poll showed the American people opposed to contra aid 58% to 20%, the most recent poll indicated the gap narrowing to 58% to 29%. A column in the Houston Post (8/23/85) says "we (the U.S.) are increasing (against dwindling protest) the pressure on the Sandinistas."

Given the overwhelming popular sentiment that still exists against U.S. aggression in Central America, the anti-intervention movement can regain the momentum that galvanized it in the spring of this year by joining forces to build united massive demonstrations in support of the demand that the U.S. end its interventionist actions in Central America and the Caribbean.

National coalitions established by movement activists during the Vietnam war succeeded in mobilizing hundreds of thousands of people in the streets of this country on a single day. After the war, U.S. government leaders acknowledged that the U.S. anti-war movement played a decisive role in getting the U.S. out of Vietnam. This could never have been accomplished if the major national anti-war organizations and local coalitions had not joined together in a national coalition.

Leaders of today's anti-intervention movement and rank-and-file activists agree that a united movement can be more effective than one that is fragmented and divided. The challenge we face is to take this general sentiment in support of unity and translate it into concrete and meaningful steps to attain unity.

Of course, there are a number of questions that require discussion throughout the movement as to how to proceed. One concerns the relationship between an anti-intervention coalition and existing coalitions whose demands go beyond Central America and the Caribbean. The proposal for a united anti-intervention coalition in no way prevents those who wish to participate in such multi-issue coalitions from doing so. At the same time, an anti-intervention formation is vitally needed in its own right. Such a coalition -- focused squarely on Central America and the Caribbean -- would help ensure that the struggle against U.S. policies in that region of the world gets the attention it must have.

Today there is a big upsurge in the anti-apartheid struggle in the United States. Anti-apartheid groups are forming local coalitions and may well form a national coalition. October 11 is a national day of protest and an opportunity for masses of people, including Central America activists, to demand an end to U.S. support for the racist apartheid regime of South Africa. This is a positive development of historic significance.

Building such a united movement that opposes U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean is equally vital.

A second question is whether a national anti-intervention coalition would duplicate the work of participating member organizations. It would not. Each organization in a coalition freely carries out its own independent activities. But a national coalition could do what no individual group or wing of the anti-intervention movement



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could do as effectively. It could unite the entire movement in building massive demonstrations. This would help give the movement the power it needs to head off further escalations.

Finally, the question is raised as to who should take leadership in forming a national anti-intervention coalition. In our view, the major national organizations which are primarily interested in Central America and the Caribbean are the logical ones to get the ball rolling by calling a national meeting or conference with representatives of all sections of the anti-intervention movement attending. If even a few of the national groups took the initiative now in calling such a gathering, we believe such action would be warmly welcomed throughout the anti-intervention movement.


We hope that you will give the above ideas serious consideration, both within your organization and among your co-workers in the anti-intervention movement. Continuing U.S. government moves in Central America and the Caribbean, whether aimed at overthrowing the Nicaraguan government or crushing liberation movements, make a united response by the U.S. anti-intervention movement mandatory.

In solidarity,

  
Ione Biggs

  
Jerry Gordon

  
Jim Lafferty

  
Sheldon B. Liss

  
Evelyn Sell

Executive Committee, Emergency National Council  
Against U.S. Intervention in  
Central America/the Caribbean





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## DO WE NEED TO REDEFINE MARXISM?

by Paul Le Blanc

"Marxism is, to be sure, the theory of revolutionary action par excellence. But it could not serve this purpose unless it was a scientific doctrine based upon true knowledge of the material conditions of development -- because these determine the nature, scope, and effectiveness of social change and political activity. By cutting away or sliding over the totality of objective factors, the revisionists invite the intrusion of pragmatism, voluntarism, and subjectivism in place of an authentic materialist method."

-- George Novack  
Polemics in Marxist Philosophy<sup>1</sup>

Periodically in the history of the Marxist movement, disputes have arisen over the question of "what is living and what is dead in Marxism" or even more fundamentally over how to define Marxism itself. Generally such debates are intimately linked to profound political disagreements. At the turn of the century, for example, the German social-democratic theorist Eduard Bernstein argued for fundamental theoretical revisions in Marxism which were designed to advance a reformist, anti-revolutionary political program. In the 1920s, Joseph Stalin attempted to define Marxism in a manner which would facilitate bureaucratic-conservative policies in the USSR and the world Communist movement. In the American Trotskyist movement of 1939-40, James Burnham argued for deep theoretical revisions which he felt were consistent with "necessary" changes in the Trotskyist program -- changes which were to result in an adaptation to imperialism.

There has recently been much discussion of changes in the politics of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, and of the new and different interpretations which the leaders of that organization have advanced regarding the theories of Lenin and Trotsky.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, these SWP leaders have also adopted a "new" definition of Marxism itself -- a fact which has received comparatively little attention. This terminological

shift may at first glance seem to be a trivial matter. The shift deserves attention, however, because it has profound implications for the relationship between revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice. An examination of this question can help us to deepen our own understanding of that relationship, and it can also contribute to our understanding of the character and trajectory of the SWP leadership.

The redefinition of Marxism, and the crisis of the SWP, can't really be separated from a general crisis which has overtaken the U.S. left since the mid-1970s. An obstacle in coming to grips with this crisis has been the weakness of the "Marxism" employed by many U.S. leftists. For some it has been little more than a set of simplistic slogans and rigid doctrines superimposed over complex and poorly-understood realities. Even among the more knowledgeable, it often tended to reduce itself to reasserting old quotes and categories that couldn't orient serious activists in the actual swirl of events. It is to the credit of the present SWP leaders that they sensed the inadequacy of such dogmatized "Marxism." The redefinition of Marxism with which they hoped to transcend such inadequacy, however, can best be seen as a reflection of their own disorientation rather than as either an enrichment or a simple retrieval of Marx's own perspective. The redefinition is severely marred by a utilitarian-pragmatist narrowness which finds expression in so many pronouncements and policies of the Barnes leadership.

Trotsky once argued that "it would be blindness on our part to ignore purely theoretical and even terminological differences, because in the course of further development they may acquire flesh and blood and lead to diametrically opposite political conclusions. Just as a tidy housewife never permits an accumulation of cobwebs and garbage, just so a revolutionary party cannot tolerate lack of clarity, confusion and equivocation. Our house must be kept clean!"<sup>3</sup>

In the present contribution we will examine the manner in which Marxism has



been defined by two leaders of the SWP, Jack Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters. This will be compared with definitions offered by such Marxists as Lenin and Trotsky. After a critical examination of Barnes's arguments for his interpretation, we will see how Marxists offer a different perspective. The practical implications of the Barnes and Waters re-interpretation will then be suggested.

Given the nature of this specific theoretical task, the present contribution will be made up largely of substantial quotations. Generally, revolutionary theory can only be advanced by going beyond text-quoting. Before our theory can advance, however, we must clear away some cobwebs and garbage. The long-handle brooms and broad shovels from the tool-shed of the early revolutionary Marxists will serve us well in this task.

### THE REDEFINITION

This is how Jack Barnes has explained the manner in which Marxism is taught at the leadership training school of the Socialist Workers Party:

"Then we went on to try to absorb what Marx and Engels tell us Marxism is. Of course, they don't use the term Marxism; they use the term communism, which is better. It's not a doctrine, they tell us, but 'a movement; it proceeds not from principles but from facts.' It isn't a theory that someone 'invented,' but instead 'actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.' The advantage that communists have over other members of their class is that they clearly understand 'the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.'

"It was the creation and concentration of industrial capital, they explain, which gave birth -- violently -- to the industrial proletariat, that gave rise to the 'ensuing class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.'

"'Communism, insofar as it is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle,' they explain, 'and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat.'

"That captures communism, Marxism...."<sup>4</sup>

This same conception of Marxism was presented one year later, in 1981, by Mary-Alice Waters, with additional for-

mulations that are worth considering. She asserted:

"You rapidly develop an intense dislike and political contempt for most of the biographers of Marx and Engels. You discover that even the best of them accept the idea that Marxism is just one more doctrine, one more schema, that two brilliant individuals worked out in their heads and then tried to impose on the workers movement. They cannot comprehend that Marxism is not a doctrine but a movement, that it is the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of humanity from all forms of exploitation and oppression and the expression of the position of the proletariat in leading the class struggle to this end. That's all.

"All the biographers portray Marx and Engels as giants attempting to vanquish other giants, to dominate, to impose their doctrine on the working class against Proudhon's, Lassalle's, Bakunin's. It's one personality against another, as well -- just like the idea that what happened in the Soviet Union after 1924 was a personal power struggle between Stalin and Trotsky.

"So you put the biographers aside and go with Marx and Engels instead. Through battle after battle, with one group of sectarians after another, all of whom are trying to impose their schemas on the course of the development of the working class, all of whom do have interests separate and apart from the working class. From the very beginning, starting with the utopians prior to 1848, through the First International, through the letters to the American Marxists, a central component of the battle is always the same: to knock the dead hand of sectarianism off the wheel so that each generation of the workers movement can find its own course and leadership...."<sup>5</sup>

There are portions of these statements by Barnes and Waters which are correct. But they are blended with conceptions which sharply diverge from the theoretical heritage of revolutionary Marxism.

### MARXISM IS A LIVING DOCTRINE

Webster's New World Dictionary tells us that "doctrine refers to a theory based on carefully worked out principles and taught or advocated by its adherents (social or scientific doctrines); dogma refers to a belief or opinion that is handed down by authority as true and indisputable, and usually connotes arbitrariness, arrogance, etc.



(religious dogma)..." It is important not to confuse these two concepts. Dogma means something different from doctrine.

According to Lenin, "it is precisely because Marxism is not a lifeless dogma, not a final, finished and ready-made, immutable doctrine, but a living guide to action that it was bound to reflect the astonishingly abrupt change in the conditions of social life." Not a lifeless dogma, not an immutable doctrine. What is it, then? Lenin insisted that "Marxism...is a living doctrine."<sup>6</sup>

Three years later, in 1913, he explained: "The Marxian doctrine is omnipotent because it is true. It is complete and harmonious, and provides men with an integral world conception which is irreconcilable with any form of superstition, reaction, or defense of bourgeois oppression. It is the legitimate successor to the best that was created by mankind in the nineteenth century in the shape of German philosophy, English political economy and French Socialism."

This is consistent with the way Lenin had described Marxism five years before: "Theories of the natural sciences which conflict with the old prejudices of theology provoked, and still provoke, the most rabid opposition. No wonder, therefore, that the Marxian doctrine, which directly serves to enlighten and organize the advanced class in modern society, indicates the tasks of this class and proves the inevitable (by virtue of economic development) replacement of the present system by a new order -- no wonder that this doctrine had to fight at every step in its course."<sup>8</sup>

We have seen how Mary-Alice Waters scorns "all the biographers" who portray Marx and Engels as "attempting...to dominate, to impose their doctrine on the working class against Proudhon's, Lassalle's, Bakunin's." Poor Lenin! He wrote: "By uniting the labor movement of various countries [in the First International], by striving to unite into the channel of joint activity the various forms of nonproletarian, pre-Marxian Socialism (Mazzini, Proudhon, Bakunin, liberal trade unionism in England, Lassallean vacillations to the Right in Germany, etc.), and by combatting the theories of all these sects and schools, Marx hammered out a uniform tactic for the proletarian struggle of the working class in the various countries."<sup>9</sup>

One assumes that "intense dislike and political contempt" won't be extended to Lenin. But what is one to do? He compounds the error (in his essay entitled "The Historical Destiny of the

Doctrine of Karl Marx") by writing: "At the beginning of the first period [1848 to 1871], Marx's doctrine by no means dominated. It was only one of extremely numerous factions or trends of Socialism...." What happened, according to Lenin? "Marxism ... ousted all the more or less integral doctrines hostile to it...." He added: "A still greater triumph awaits Marxism, as the doctrine of the proletariat, in the period of history that is now ensuing."<sup>10</sup>

One gets the distinct impression that Barnes and Waters are blurring together the concept of dogma with that of doctrine. While attempting to develop a pragmatist variant of Marxism, the philosopher Sidney Hook created a similar conceptual blur. Leon Trotsky responded:

"The title of your article, 'Marxism--Dogma or Method?' provokes a certain inquietude. The alternative does not cover the question. Marxism is not a dogma, but it is not only a method; it is also a doctrine. The materialist dialectic is a method. Marx, however, not only formulated this method, but applied it in two domains, by creating the theory of capitalist economy...and the theory of the historical processes...."<sup>11</sup>

Sidney Hook might have responded that with such an interpretation Marxism would be "no longer regarded as essentially the theory and practice of social revolution, but as a science of social development," transforming it into a set of "orthodox doctrines" ill-suited to a dynamically changing world.<sup>12</sup> The present-day re-definers certainly seem to feel that it's wrong to view Marxism as anything other than the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. But Trotsky was adamant:

"You say that the Marxian doctrine can no more be understood independent of its revolutionary aims than the prescriptions of a physician independent of the concern of health. Within certain limits it is possible to accept this comparison. But the only physician capable of giving useful prescriptions is one who bases his action upon anatomy, physiology, and a series of other positive sciences. How is it possible to detach the realistic practice from the scientific theory?"<sup>13</sup>

Lenin and Trotsky seem to agree: Marxism encompasses method and doctrine; these don't arise spontaneously in the class struggle; they must be "imposed" (i.e., Marxists must struggle to win the leadership of the workers' movement).

In the lengthy passage reproduced earlier, Jack Barnes offers six (full or



fragmented) quotations in his account of Marxism. Each quotation he attributes jointly to Marx and Engels, and the quotations seem to show that -- like Barnes himself -- these two revolutionists had a very different conception of Marxism than did Lenin and Trotsky. If this is so, perhaps the SWP leaders are performing a service, quietly making long over-due corrections in the sloppy formulations of the well-meaning Bolshevik leaders.

## MARX AND ENGELS: TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

In order to determine what is going on, we will have to examine the original texts. We must see where the quotations come from, make sure they are being communicated to us accurately, and then look at the historical contexts in which they were articulated. Only then can we be certain that they bear the weight of Barnes's interpretation.

Let us first identify the six quotes, in the order that Barnes offers them.

1. "Communism is not a doctrine but a movement; it proceeds not from principles but from facts." Sidney Hook may be the first person to have translated into English and drawn attention to this statement, in his 1936 study From Hegel to Marx. Like Barnes, he attributes it to both Marx and Engels. In fact, it is from an old polemic written solely by Frederick Engels in 1847 entitled "The Communists and Karl Heinzen," which was first translated into English in its entirety several years ago.<sup>14</sup>

2. "The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer." (Emphasis added.) This is from the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels. The only part of this quote used by Barnes is the word that we have emphasized, and he weaves this word into a formulation of his own that is quite different from what Marx and Engels are saying. As Barnes puts it: "It [i.e., Marxism] isn't a theory that someone 'invented'...."<sup>15</sup>

3. "They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes." This passage from the Communist Manifesto immediately follows, in the original text, the passage quoted in point #2.

4. "The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and most resolute section of

the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement." (Emphasis added.) This, too, is from the Manifesto, coming two paragraphs before the quotation in point #3. Only the portion we have emphasized is quoted by Barnes. The rest of the passage he summarizes in a diluted fashion, dropping references to theoretical superiority and to pushing forward the workers' movement.

5. "Communism has followed from large scale industry and its consequences, ... from the creation of the proletariat and the concentration of capital, from the ensuing class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie." (Emphasis added.) Barnes here returns to Engels's polemic with Heinzen, quoting the underlined passage without distortion.

6. "Communism, insofar as it is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat." This, too, comes from Engels's 1847 polemic. Barnes quotes it in full. In the original text, it follows the quotation in point #5.

The quotations from Engels's early polemic (in points #1 and #6) appear to give the greatest support to Barnes's interpretation. (Also, in contrast to the way he uses the Manifesto, Barnes seems to quote more accurately from the Engels article.) An obvious question is whether the remarks of the youthful Engels in a relatively obscure polemic can really support the weight of this dramatic new interpretation.

What cannot be found in any of these quotations, however, is the assertion which is central to Barnes's whole line of argument: that the communism referred to means the same thing as Marxism. In fact, Barnes has badly distorted the reality.

It should be remembered that in 1847 Marxism can barely be said to have existed as a current in the workers' movement, or even as a distinct theoretical tendency. Marx and Engels were immersed in theoretical and practical activity, but most of their work lay in the future. They had already worked out the basic outlines of what was to become Marxism, but this was in no way synonymous with the actually existing communist movement. Valuable information on this question is provided by Frederick



Engels's historical sketch, "On the History of the Communist League" (1885). It is worthwhile to review what Engels tells us.

In the 1840s, there were diverse currents among the communist-minded workers who were multiplying throughout Germany and in neighboring countries. There was "the French worker-communism, reminiscent of Babouvism [a primitive-communist creed of Gracchus Babeuf, arising among the Parisian lower classes in the 1790s] and taking shape in Paris at about this time." Among German artisans there was a primitive-communist doctrine propounded by Wilhelm Weitling, "a communist theoretician who could be boldly placed at the side of his contemporary French rivals." Soon Hermann Kriege would espouse "an extravagant communism of love dreaming, based on 'love' and overflowing with love." Within a few years another current would arise around August Willich, "one of those sentimental Communists so common in Western Germany since 1845.... He was entirely the prophet, convinced of his personal mission as the predestined liberator of the German proletariat and as such a direct claimant as much to political as to military dictatorship. Thus, to the primitive Christian communism previously preached by Weitling was added a kind of communist Islam."

All of these currents, and more, existed within the Communist League, an international (though predominantly German) association of mostly skilled workers who were "capable of instinctively anticipating their future development and of constituting themselves, even if not yet with full consciousness, the party of the proletariat."

Meanwhile, an "essentially different communism was developing alongside that of the League" -- the distinctive communist theories of Marx and Engels. By 1845, "Marx had already fully developed his materialist theory of history in its main features...and now we applied ourselves to the detailed elaboration of the newly-won mode of outlook in the most varied directions."<sup>16</sup>

We can see here that what Barnes and Waters say about Marxism is not accurate. Their generalizations do apply to what the young Engels referred to as "communism" in 1847, which, as we can see, was not simply a doctrine "invented" by someone, but was a diverse movement brought into being by the rise of industrial capitalism. Barnes insists that Marxism is not a theory that someone "invented." Would he accept the mature Engels's formulation that it was "developed" and "elaborated" by Marx and

himself? Waters denies that Marxism is a "doctrine that two brilliant individuals worked out [developed and elaborated?] in their heads and then tried to impose on the workers movement." Instead of speaking of "imposing," let's accept this description of what Marx and Engels did:

"It was our duty to provide a scientific foundation for our view, but it was equally important for us to win over the European and in the first place the German proletariat to our conviction. As soon as we had become clear in our own minds, we set about the task."

The task was made easier, because a "quiet revolution...was taking place in the League, and especially among the [exiled] leaders in London. The inadequacy of the previous conception of communism, both the simple French equalitarian communism and that of Weitling, became more and more clear to them." They urged Marx and Engels to join the Communist League, which the two did in 1847. They became effective publicists for the organization, were able to have a profound theoretical impact, and were commissioned to write the Communist Manifesto.

And yet Marxism and communism still did not become identical, as the continuing debates described by Engels should make clear. Most revealing is this account of a development taking place during the revolutionary months of 1848:

"The compositor Stephan Born, who had worked in Brussels and Paris as an active member of the League, founded a Workers' Brotherhood in Berlin which became fairly widespread and existed until 1850. Born, a very talented young man, who, however, was a bit too much in a hurry to become a political figure, 'fraternized' with the most miscellaneous ragtag and bobtail in order to get a crowd together, and was not at all the man who could bring unity into the conflicting tendencies, light into chaos. Consequently, in the official publications of the association the views represented in the Communist Manifesto were mingled hodge-podge with guild recollections and guild aspirations, fragments of Louis Blanc and Proudhon, protectionism, etc.; in short, they wanted to please everybody. In particular, strikes, trade unions and producers' cooperatives were set going and it was forgotten that above all it was a question of first conquering, by means of political victories, the field in which alone such things could be realized on a lasting basis."<sup>17</sup>

After the brutal suppression of the



revolutionary upsurge, the Communist League (and the general communist movement referred to in the quote-fragments cited by Barnes) declined and went out of existence. Marxism, on the other hand, continued to develop and was able to have a greater impact on the workers movement beginning in the mid-1860s and even more in the following decades. In this period Marx and Engels did not call it either Marxism or communism, they called it scientific socialism. They believed, in Engels's words, that this body of theory was necessary "to bring to the consciousness of the now oppressed class the conditions and nature of the [revolutionary] act which it is its destiny to accomplish."<sup>18</sup>

Marxism as we know it did not become the dominant force in the socialist workers' movement until the 1880s, thanks especially to Engels's systematization in Anti-Duehring (1878). As David Riazanov has pointed out: "It was epoch-making in the history of Marxism. It was from this book that the younger generation which began its activity during the second half of the 1870s learned what was scientific socialism, what were its philosophical premises, what was its method.... For the dissemination of Marxism as a special method and a spe-

cial system, no book except Capital itself has done as much as Anti-Duehring.... At the beginning of the 1880s a change took place in the European labor movement. Owing to Engels' tireless labors and his splendid popularizing gifts, Marxism was steadily gaining ground."<sup>19</sup>

Of course, Riazanov is a biographer of Marx and Engels, but it would be wrong to join in regarding him as "contemptible." The first director of the Marx-Engels Institute of Moscow in the era of Lenin and Trotsky, Riazanov played a major role in the education of young Bolsheviks. He himself had been active as a revolutionary Marxist for many years. It was Riazanov who began the titanic task of gathering, editing and publishing the Collected Works of Marx and Engels -- before he was destroyed by Stalin. This biographer and Bolshevik educator has much to teach revolutionaries of today about the Marxism of Marx and Engels.

Even after the 1880s, the claim that Marxism was identical with the revolutionary workers movement would be a most dubious claim, as we shall see. □

[To be concluded next month]

#### NOTES

1. George Novack, Polemics in Marxist Philosophy (Monad Press, 1978), p. 110.
2. See, for example, Dianne Feeley and Paul Le Blanc, In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity (Socialist Action, 1984), and Cliff Copner, Crisis in the Socialist Workers Party: An Answer to Jack Barnes (Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1985).
3. Leon Trotsky, In Defense of Marxism (Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 5.
4. Jack Barnes, "Launching the Party Leadership School," Party Organizer, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1980, p. 14.
5. Mary-Alice Waters, "Leadership Report," SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 37, No. 10, June 1981, p. 4.
6. V.I. Lenin, Marx-Engels-Marxism (Morrow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), pp. 324, 327.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93, 276, 96.
11. Leon Trotsky, Writings, 1932-33 (Pathfinder Press, 1978), p. 200.
12. Sidney Hook, Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx (John Day Co., 1933), p. 25.
13. Trotsky, Writings, 1932-33, p. 200.
14. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 6 (International Publishers, 1976), pp. 303-304. Also see Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx (University of Michigan Press, 1962), pp. 206-324.
15. Marx and Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 6, pp. 498, 497.
16. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works, Vol. III (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), pp. 174, 177, 180, 186, 178.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 180, 185.
18. Frederick Engels, Herr Eugen Duehring's Revolution in Science (International Publishers, 1966), p. 310.
19. David Riazanov, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, An Introduction to Their Lives and Work (Monthly Review Press, 1973), pp. 210-211.



# A REVOLUTIONARY TOOL FOR MODERN TIMES: THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

by Steve Bloom

Many who would call themselves Marxists have probably never heard of it. It is one of the least utilized tools in the arsenal of revolutionaries. Yet the transitional program is, at the same time, one of the most important acquisitions of the Marxist movement in this century.

What is the transitional program? In its most narrow sense the term refers to a specific document--the original title of which was "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International." It was drafted by Leon Trotsky during his last exile in Mexico and was adopted as the founding program of the FI in 1938. But the concept of a transitional program has a broader meaning as well. That specific document was, in fact, the codification of decades of experience by revolutionary Marxists around the world.

The term "transitional program" also refers to a general method of approaching the class struggle--a method which was first utilized by Marx and Engels in drafting the Communist Manifesto, was applied by the Bolsheviks during the course of the Russian revolution and afterward through the early years of the Comintern, and was finally codified at the founding conference of the Fourth International. Since 1938, the parties of the Fourth International have sought to continue applying the general methodology of the transitional program in approaching new developments in the class struggle.

## KEY PROBLEM

The reason the transitional program is so important is that it addresses the most difficult problem that revolutionaries face in the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism: How to develop the consciousness of the masses, who are imbued with bourgeois values and assumptions, i.e., who take the current

socio-economic system as inevitable in their lives. How do we help to develop their consciousness beyond this, to an understanding of the necessity and possibility of socialist revolution?

Surprisingly, this key problem is rarely considered by those who would like to see the overthrow of capitalism. Most who call themselves revolutionaries act as if the consciousness of the workers and their allies will develop spontaneously, or automatically, and that when this happens the "genuine" Marxists will, as a matter of course, gain their rightful place at the head of the insurrection. Such a view is completely schematic, but its prevalence accounts for the lack of attention paid in most "revolutionary" circles to the problem of a transitional approach.

The transitional method begins with the immediate needs and concerns of the masses, the most obvious and pressing problems, yet does this in a way that helps to show that they are connected to, and a result of, much more fundamental difficulties--the basic structural problems and contradictions that are inherent in the capitalist economic system. Through this process overall class consciousness can be advanced and the idea of the socialist revolution becomes a natural outgrowth of day-to-day struggles.

The "Death Agony of Capitalism" document followed this approach. It contained both a conjunctural analysis of the immediate situation faced by the workers movement internationally in 1938--with its economic depression, the imminent threat of world war, and fascist dictatorships in a number of developed countries--as well as a set of specific demands and slogans that addressed this situation. Considering the big changes which have taken place in the world between 1938 and today it is remarkable to what extent many of the demands and slogans of this resolution maintain their relevance. Of course much of the conjunctural analysis is now of primarily historical interest, and some of the medium-term prognoses were simply wrong. (For example, the war did not

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This article is based on a talk given by the author in Cleveland, Ohio, on August 16, 1985.



lead to socialist revolutions led by mass Fourth Internationalist parties.)

If we look critically at any document from the history of the Marxist movement--and that is the only way to look--from the Communist Manifesto to the present day, we will discover this same reality. Some parts will be outdated; some parts have turned out to be wrong; while others remain strikingly fresh and alive. The "Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" took up the world in 1938; we must take it up almost fifty years later.

But the fact that so much of this resolution does maintain its vitality despite the changes in the world since 1938 shows that the demands and slogans of the transitional program really do capture something about the essence of the crisis of capitalism--a crisis which has the same fundamental elements today even though many of the specific symptoms are different. These are not demands dreamed up as a result of divine inspiration, but reflect the real experiences of the class struggle.

#### NOT A RIGID TEXT

At the same time, the transitional program cannot be viewed as some rigid set of slogans fixed and determined in 1938 and valid for all times and places. The importance of a particular aspect of the system's crisis may come to the fore at one moment, only to recede in importance later on, or be superseded by some other aspect at a different time. In different parts of the world, a variety of questions and issues are likely to be of primary urgency.

In addition, the contradictions of the capitalist system emerge unevenly. New aspects of reality constantly reveal themselves. The movements of Blacks and other oppressed nationalities in the United States, of youth and women around the world, have all become much more pressing since 1938. The revolutionary movement has had to address itself to these and other new developments.

That's how new slogans and ideas become part of the transitional program. In fact, the Socialist Workers Party in the United States adopted "A Transitional Program for Black Liberation" in 1969, and in the same year the Fourth International adopted a resolution titled "A Strategy for Revolutionary Youth." These attempted to codify the specific lessons of these struggles and explain how they could contribute to our overall goal of a socialist revolution. (Both of these documents are published as appendixes to the third edition of

the book, The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution, by Leon Trotsky, 1977, Pathfinder Press. The same book contains the text of "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International," and related material.)

The development of such documents by our movement today would be far more difficult without the dramatic effect which the original codification of the transitional approach in 1938 had on our methodology. This was one of Trotsky's last great contributions before his death. Although a transitional method was inherent in Marxism from its inception, and the Comintern even had a brief discussion of the concept of transitional demands in 1922, it was not something about which revolutionists had been truly conscious. Through the process of drafting the "Death Agony of Capitalism" resolution and the discussions about the program which led up to it, Trotsky helped those who came after him apply a transitional approach in a more systematic, and therefore more effective, manner.

#### THREE KINDS OF DEMANDS

There are three different kinds of demands that make up the transitional program: immediate demands; democratic demands; and transitional demands. Each of them has an important place, and understanding their different but interconnected roles is essential to understanding the transitional program itself.

Immediate demands are those that flow from, and can be formulated spontaneously as a result of, the day-to-day experiences of the masses. Trade union demands for higher wages, or defense of workers rights on the job, are a good example.

Democratic demands reflect the continued fight for basic liberties formally won in this country as a result of the 1776 War of Independence and the Civil War--our two bourgeois democratic revolutions. These are things such as free speech and the right to political organization (which are supposedly guaranteed by the Bill of Rights but which, as we know, we must continually fight to maintain); and the equality of all citizens regardless of race, or nationality (which is again legally recognized but honored more in the breach), or sex (which is not yet even legally recognized in this country).

Finally we have transitional demands proper. These are the slogans which lead directly toward the idea of workers control and a socialist reorga-



nization of society: "Organize a labor party which can run the government in the interests of working people, not the rich!" "Open the books of the corporations which claim they cannot afford to pay decent wages!" "Reduce the workweek with no loss of pay to provide more jobs!" "Organize a massive public-works program to build roads, hospitals, schools and also provide jobs!" "Let the bosses, not the workers, pay for the crisis--raise wages to keep up with the cost of living!" "Nationalize companies that claim they can't continue to operate profitably and turn control of them over to the workers!"

All of these ideas can be presented in a way that seems eminently reasonable to people based on their experiences within the present system. But in reality they require socialism for their full implementation. I stress the words full implementation, because there is a common misconception about transitional slogans--that it is impossible for them to be won under capitalism. That isn't true. Struggles of the workers can win aspects of these demands--for example a reduction of the workweek or an escalator clause in a union contract. But the full implementation of a system whereby the necessary social labor is shared equally among all those who need a job and everyone gets her or his fair share of the collective economic product will require a socialist transformation of the economy.

#### INTERRELATIONSHIP OF DEMANDS

While it is transitional demands in particular which are the unique contribution of the revolutionary Marxist movement, the transitional method is not reducible to transitional demands alone. What is key is the interaction and interrelationship between the three types of slogans. This, too, is a unique understanding of revolutionary Marxism.

Unlike reformists, we don't see the struggle for immediate and democratic demands as ends in themselves. This doesn't mean that they are unimportant in their own right; they are. But this is not their only or even their primary importance. Revolutionaries try to use struggles for immediate and democratic demands to advance the consciousness and organization of the masses as one part of the broader struggle for socialism. This also differs from the attitude of ultraleft currents, which tend to disdain any struggles which aren't radical enough for their taste.

One good illustration of the interaction of the three kinds of demands

which comes from the "Death Agony of Capitalism" document itself is the way it treats the trade union movement and the economic struggles of the working class. It presents a series of ideas, which start from the simple strengthening and defense of the unions and their struggles.

From there it discusses the obvious need to broaden out such struggles in order to gain more power, and of the need for factory committees to carry out a particular battle in a more militant and all-encompassing fashion. From a discussion of the difficulties that will arise in the course of the activity of the factory committee we move on to the need to open the books--to provide that committee with the knowledge it needs to help suggest solutions to the problems faced by the workers it represents.

When the capitalists continue to insist that they cannot apply such solutions and still make a profit, the transitional program raises the idea of expropriation of the capitalists, so the workers--who don't have to worry about profits--can solve the problems themselves. This leads in turn to the need for armed self-defense by the workers so they can protect themselves against the inevitable attacks of the capitalists who will resist such expropriations. The final conclusion is the need for the workers to take over the government, as this will be the final support of the capitalists against the armed workers. We proceed logically from a simple defense of workers rights on the job--i.e., immediate demands--to the conquest of state power.

#### METHOD OF STRUGGLE

A related aspect of the transitional program, which distinguishes a revolutionary Marxist understanding, is our approach to the methods of struggle that are used even in the fight for immediate and democratic demands. We insist on those methods that educate the masses, that teach them to rely on themselves and on themselves alone to resolve their problems.

This is why we are particularly insistent on the question of mass action, of militant pickets and street demonstrations as the best way to make the power of the workers and their allies felt--both by the ruling class and by the masses themselves. This is directly counterposed to the strategy advocated by many in the radical movement who believe that the way to win reforms is by getting Congress to pass some particular piece of legislation.



Such forces may organize demonstrations, but it is always and only as an adjunct to their lobbying and legislative efforts.

Our view is the opposite. We aren't opposed to parliamentary initiatives per se; getting specific legislation adopted can be of crucial importance at times. But we don't see this as the main vehicle for social change. Legislative initiatives are useful primarily when they serve as an aid to the self-organization of the masses. The fight for the Equal Rights Amendment is a good example. Ratification of the ERA by the state legislatures would have been a big victory. But ratification of the amendment would not have guaranteed equal rights for women, any more than adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed equal rights to ex-slaves.

What could begin to win equality for women would be the kind of massive mobilization of women themselves, along with the workers movement and others in this country, that remain necessary to win the ERA--just as it was the mobilization of the Black masses that finally won an end to Jim Crow segregation in the South. This is the main reason why the NOW leadership's pro-Democratic Party, "respectable" campaign for the ERA was such a disaster. It was not just because that campaign failed to gain ratification of the amendment, but primarily because it failed to mobilize the movement that can truly win a measure of equality--whether or not the ERA is formally adopted.

The difference between these two approaches may seem like a subtle one, but understanding it is crucial to understanding the transitional approach. No basic political question has ever been decided by parliamentary means--only by the clash of social forces. One clear illustration of this is the conflict over slavery in this country in the middle of the last century. The "democratic process" expressed itself on this issue through the election of Lincoln as president. The Southern slave-owners knew full well what that election meant, and launched a bloody civil war--the most brutal sort of mass action--to test the real relationship of forces. And it took a victory by the North in the war to actually bring about an end to slavery. The Southern ruling class wasn't willing to accede to any sort of parliamentary process. The same reality holds true for the U.S. ruling class today.

That's why revolutionary Marxists, applying the transitional program, insist on methods which don't simply ap-

peal to the good will or morality of this country's rulers. We must understand that any concessions we might win will be forced from them. Our task is to organize struggles which help the workers to understand this as well.

## RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

The relevance of the transitional program for our situation today can be seen if we look at some of the specific pressing problems faced by working people in the U.S. Let's take the question of the trade union movement and the workers fight-back. It's easy to see that workers are under attack and that the unions are in crisis. The elementary solution to this is also fairly obvious: a good dose of class solidarity.

But how do we forge this solidarity? This is where the role of conscious revolutionists and other class-struggle militants in the unions comes in. We can find demands in the transitional program which correspond to the present level of consciousness of the workers and begin to raise them in a systematic way. We have already discussed the most important of these: a labor party; escalator clause; shorter workweek with no cut in pay; open the books; organize the unorganized. All of these can be explained in reasonable terms. They may seem outlandish or impractical to many at first, but steady propaganda and education can win ever broader layers to the fight for these goals.

And through that fight we can see how the transitional dynamic will be unleashed. Every working person understands the need for a job at a decent wage. But this idea, perceived as an elementary right, comes squarely into conflict with the basic laws of bourgeois economics--which dictate that capitalism cannot provide a steady job at a living wage for all of its working class. The struggle around this issue begins to break down the illusions of the masses in the benevolence of the bourgeois system--illusions which provide the primary prop by which the bourgeoisie remains in power. This, in turn, leads to a further radicalization and a readiness to fight for more radical demands.

It is important to note here another aspect of the transitional method. We do not approach the masses all at once with the entire program and demand that they accept it completely. We propose only a struggle around those items on which support from large numbers can be mobilized. We pick and choose battles which correspond to the actual con-



sciousness and conditions, and the fight for these leads to more radical conclusions.

We follow a similar method in another area with striking relevance for this country at the present time, the demand: "Let the people vote on war!" Another way of saying the same thing would be, "Let the majority of the population decide on questions of war and peace!" This was a vital issue in 1938 when the "Death Agony" document was drafted, with preparations being made by the imperialist ruling classes for World War II, and it remains so today with the campaign of the Reagan administration in Central America.

We don't ask people in this country to support socialist revolution in Central America (or to be consciously "anti-imperialist") before we will join with them to demand that this government cease its attempt to unilaterally overthrow the FSLN in Nicaragua, or to prop up dictatorial regimes in other Central American countries against the will of the peoples of those countries. We simply ask that they agree with us that every country in Latin America be given the right to determine its own form of government for itself, without interference from the United States--a basic democratic demand.

What happened during the Vietnam war helps make the dynamic of this type of development clear. The campaign we waged in this country against that war was capsulized in the simple slogan "Bring the Troops Home Now!" which was eventually shortened to "Out Now!" This meant two things: first, let the people of Vietnam decide for themselves what kind of government they want without interference from U.S. troops; and second, let the majority of the population of the United States, which doesn't want

the war to continue, have the final say over whether or not it does.

The campaign around these elementary democratic ideas were instrumental in the radicalization of an entire generation in the U.S. The massive movement that arose exposed the hypocrisy and cynicism of the U.S. ruling class--its role as the defender of the rich and privileged--far more effectively than revolutionists could ever have done had we been limited to abstract propaganda on the same subject. The experiences of millions in that movement was a giant class-struggle school. The danger that the masses might learn their lesson in that school too well was one of the major factors which prompted the decision of the U.S. rulers to disengage from the war, even at the expense of a "Communist takeover" of Indochina.

Today we are faced with a similar challenge and opportunity regarding U.S. policy in Central America, and in South Africa as well. Once again, the basic democratic right of oppressed peoples to self-determination must be stressed in an effort to mobilize the most massive protests against the policies of our own government.

#### AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

Vietnam, Central America, and South Africa also point out another aspect of the transitional program--its deep and thoroughgoing internationalism. It is not a program for any specific country, but for the entire world--even though individual aspects of it are aimed at specific regions of the globe. This internationalist perspective is also unique to revolutionary Marxists.

Our fight for the third American revolution is part of a worldwide struggle for socialism. We must be concerned with and help think through every aspect of that worldwide struggle, and understand the relationship between our battles here and those in every other country. In addition to the questions of Central America and South Africa, which are on everyone's mind today, events over the last few years in other countries, like the rise of Solidarnosc in Poland and the British coal miners' strike, have deeply affected the class struggle in the United States. The solidarity, or lack of it, by workers here also affects the outcome of these and similar battles.

The transitional program takes up the problems of the revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, of the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracies which have usurped

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

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power in the deformed and degenerated workers' states, and of the colonial revolution against imperialist domination. All of these battles, taken together, constitute our worldwide struggle for socialism.

It should now be obvious why the transitional program is an essential tool for those who want to make a revolution in today's world. And it should not be hard to understand, as a corollary, why revolutionary Marxists are the only ones who have concerned themselves with the development of such a program--both in the sense of a specific document and set of demands, and in the sense of an overall method.

The transitional program has frequently been likened to a bridge between the capitalist present and the socialist future, or between the present consciousness of the working masses and their future revolutionary consciousness. Neither reformists nor sectarians have any need for such a bridge.

#### REFORMISTS AND SECTARIANS

Reformists are firmly planted in the present. They don't need a transition to the future because they have no intention of ever going there.

Sectarians, on the other hand, are already--at least in their own minds--living in a period of mass revolutionary consciousness. All that's needed, they seem to think, is for someone with sufficient authority to come along and issue a call to action. That's why they spend much of their time decrying the fact that the present leadership of whatever movement they happen to be interested in hasn't yet issued the demand for a socialist revolution. They seem to think that this would solve the problem.

It is also instructive to look at a specific group of sectarians who do tend to identify with what they call the "Transitional Program." In fact, they tend to shout long and loud about it. These groups are descended from and try to identify with the Trotskyist current in the working class movement, but they have nothing in common with the methods of Trotsky or the transitional program.

For them the "Transitional Program" is a specific set of ideas written down on paper in 1938. They reject thinking of it as a method with which to approach the class struggle. They refuse to recognize any idea that was not incorporated into the 1938 resolution, and when they look for slogans or ideas

within that resolution to apply to the present day, they tend to pick the most extreme possible demands, or ask the workers to swallow the whole thing at one gulp.

#### THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Finally, it's worth taking up the evolution of the Socialist Workers Party's present leadership and its attitude toward the transitional program. It was the SWP leadership in 1938 which collaborated with Trotsky in drafting the "Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International." It was the SWP which sponsored this resolution at the FI founding conference. Yet today, and for the past several years, the transitional method has been totally lacking in the SWP leadership's approach to the U.S. and international class struggles. (See my article, "Whatever Happened to the Transitional Program?" in Bulletin IDOM #21.) If we look at why this has taken place it sheds a great deal of light both on the methodology of the Barnes leadership of the party and on the nature of the transitional program itself.

The central party leaders have decided that they no longer need the transitional approach. Their current infatuation with the leaderships of the Nicaraguan and Cuban revolutions makes them think that there is a shortcut toward raising the consciousness of U.S. workers. All we have to do is point to a snapshot of Cuba or Nicaragua--take people on tours or show some slides. They will gain an instant understanding and we can avoid a long and difficult process.

Of course this is a completely idealist notion. It idealizes the reality of the Nicaraguan and Cuban revolutions themselves, and completely misunderstands why and how U.S. workers will come to socialist conclusions.

There can be no substitute for the American working class going through its own experience of struggle and in that process learning its own lessons. Only if we succeed in constructing a revolutionary party that understands this and can bring the necessary transitional slogans to the masses in order to mobilize them in action and advance their consciousness will we be able to bring about a socialist transformation of this country. And that, in the final analysis, is what makes a transitional program the paramount revolutionary tool for modern times. □



## SAMPLES FROM THE NEW CANNON BOOK

The latest James P. Cannon book, The Communist League of America 1932-34, was reviewed in our October issue. For lack of space, this supplementary feature had to be postponed to this issue.

### SEE THINGS AS THEY ARE (pp. 37-38)

If we are going to find our way in the charged social atmosphere of these days, the first obligation laid upon us is to see things as they are. History assigns an enormous role to the conscious revolutionaries, who foresee the line of march theoretically; but it does not allow us to force events by our own wishes. Marxism is no doctrine of social miracles wrought by small minorities. It has nothing in common with putschism. Even if one is convinced — as we are convinced — that we are near the threshold of great events and great changes in the life of the American working class, it is not permissible to forget for a moment that we alone will not and cannot be the authors of these changes and these events. The future of American communism is bright with promise, but we will move toward that great future only insofar as the working masses move with us at every step.

The material conditions are long ripe for a tremendous upsurge of militant labor. This we know and this is the foundation of our perspectives. But the workers do not react automatically to the material pressure upon them, and there is no rule by which to foretell the extent and tempo of

their movement in advance. That must be judged and estimated as it actually unfolds or, at least, as it is clearly intimated. A clear-sighted study of the mood and temper of the workers must precede and regulate the daily tactics and working methods of the revolutionary party if it really aims to accelerate and influence the collisions of class forces.

Unemployment on the one side and wage reductions on the other are weighing down upon virtually the whole working class of America and ruthlessly changing all the accustomed conditions and standards of life. But in spite of that — and this is the most singular and inescapable fact in the situation — the workers have not yet begun the inevitable movement of revolt. Under pressure of conditions that become more and more intolerable, the workers are undergoing a profound mental change. But the outward signs of this change are not yet manifest to any appreciable extent. It is like the slow accumulation of steam in a sealed boiler that has not yet reached the explosive point. The explosion will come, and it may come unannounced; but it is not the storm — it is but rather the dead calm before the storm — that characterizes the present situation.

### FOSTER GROUP AND CANNON GROUP: TWO METHODS (pp. 104-5)

As far back as 1925 we began to realize that the faction struggle between the Ruthenberg-Pepper-Lovestone group on the one side and the Foster-Cannon group on the other was degenerating more and more into a vulgar gang fight in which "political issues" were being conceived as pretexts for the struggle for power rather than motivating causes for it. Our break with the Foster group and our forming a separate one was inspired, among other causes, by the determination to liberate ourselves from these unprincipled feuds and to approach questions from a political standpoint. That split was accompanied by a bitter fight which will not be forgotten, and should not be forgotten by those who bore the brunt of it. The contrast in methods of the two groups at the time of the split — political arguments on the one side and personal attacks and slander on the other — symbolized and foreshadowed the whole future development of the two groups. The political method brought us eventually to the eminence of the Left Opposition; the personal method, the slander, the emphasis on incidentals,

and similar trivialities, brought the Foster group eventually to the foul swamp of Stalinism. Let us not forget the road we traveled by.

The fate of the Foster group after the split with us is a terrific warning as to the significance of *method*. This group, as you know, was in the main a sound one in its composition. Under proper guidance it could have developed on the revolutionary path, for it was made up of proletarian militants, for the most part, who wanted to be communists. But Foster's method was not calculated to help them in this aspiration. His method was personal slander, personal incitement, appeals to prejudice and gang spirit and clique interests. Thus their political development was arrested; after their break with us, the group steadily deteriorated, and this political deterioration was in no way compensated for by numbers. The factional struggle is not only the factional struggle; it is one of the most important means whereby the party, and in our case the league, is either politically educated or politically demoralized.



## OUR APPEAL FOR READMISSION TO THE PARTY (pp. 119-20)

Since the position of the Left Opposition on the subject of party unity, as on all other important issues, is founded on principle, a consistency in its expressions on the matter from time to time can be noted. From our first statement in regard to unity at the plenum which confirmed our expulsion three and one-half years ago, through the various occasions in which we again raised the question in timely communications to the party, until the present day, we have been guided by the example and teaching of our incomparable leaders, the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists. Just as they, in their platform and in all subsequent declarations, affirmed their desire to remain in the party, and their willingness to defend their views by the normal processes of party democracy and party discipline, so we have always protested against our enforced separation from the party. We never made any special demands that were not taken for granted and enjoyed by every party member in Lenin's time, and we do not make them now.

Our chief concern, which transcends all other considerations, is the return of the party and the Comintern to the foundation principles of Marxism. Since 1928, first within the party and afterward as an expelled group, we have advocated, on all the important questions of the day, the Marxist line of the International Left Opposition against the opportunist and adventurist zig-zags of official centrism. These views, the correctness of which has been confirmed in every case by the events of the class struggle, we still maintain. We have nothing to repent and nothing to retract.

Unity for us cannot be the formula for a reconciliation with the treacherous policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy, but a condition for the more advantageous struggle against it. The rectification of the truly enormous errors and crimes, not the least of which are the ruinous splits that have been imposed upon the workers' vanguard, will take place only in the course of the most relentless Bolshevik fight against the bureaucrats of Stalinism, and will be finally assured only with their downfall. In order that the workers who sincerely desire the unification of the party may have no illusions as to its actual meaning, this must be said directly, openly, and plainly.

This is not to say, of course, that the differences must be settled beforehand, or that the platform of the Left Opposition must be accepted as a condition for unity. We have never demanded that. The demand of the Left Opposition is for party democracy, as Lenin's party defined and practiced it. A free and open discussion of the disputes within the

framework of the party. A convention whose delegates are fairly and honestly selected on the basis of the discussion. A leadership freely elected by the membership and subject to its control. The right of the minority to work in the party and to advance its viewpoint a second, a third, or a tenth time on proper occasion, within the limits of the party constitution. This is the way Lenin's party clarified its policies, corrected its errors, chose its leaders, and safeguarded its unity.

**James P. Cannon**  
WRITINGS AND SPEECHES, 1912-34

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## WHEN MY INTERNATIONALISM IS CHALLENGED (pp. 146-7)

However, if there are comrades in the league who do not know the history of the party and who seriously and honestly want to be enlightened on my attitude toward internationalism, I will not refuse to answer their questions. Records exist on the subject. The question can be studied and verified on the firmest possible basis — on a basis of established facts.

I was not a patriot during the war. I was a supporter of the Russian revolution since 1917. I was a founding member of the Communist Party, which came into existence as a result of the split over international questions. I was not the last one of the American party leaders to come out in support of the Russian Opposition and its international platform, and I think I have been loyal to that platform.

There is a record of fifteen consecutive years during which the mainspring of my political work has been internationalism. In that record one can distinguish four decisive occasions when allegiance to the principle of internationalism was tested — 1917, 1919, 1928, and 1932. On each occasion I took the international question of the hour as my point of departure and subordinated everything else to it. This is precisely what I have meant during the past year in continually insisting that our position on the international questions had to take precedence over all others, and certainly over the picayune quarrel of three years ago.

The international resolution of the NC today is no less significant to me than our declaration of 1928, just as my support of the Russian Opposition in 1928, after I had finally grasped the essence of the ques-

tion, was for me as compulsory as was my support of the Communist International in 1919. Real internationalism is tested by its consistent manifestations at every turn of events and under all sorts of changing conditions, by the indissoluble connections of one action with another, by the decisive prominence one gives to internationalism in all of his activity.

By this I do not maintain that I have been free from fault or error on international questions in the past. My reference is to the fact that international questions have always been paramount for me *insofar as I have clearly grasped them*.

On the other hand I am far from denying a tendency toward provincialism, which is inseparable from all Americans who came by the same road that I traveled — that is, by the road of direct participation first in the native American labor movement without international orientation or guidance. I had to acquire internationalism. It took a long time. The process was a painful and difficult one, and very probably remains uncompleted. In this field I am still a seeker, a learner. It is very hard for an American to be a thoroughgoing internationalist in the genuine, not superficial, sense of the word. He is not born with this gift. The difficulties of distance, plus language handicaps, determined, and yet determine for me a slowness of orientation and a difficulty in quickly understanding international questions. (Example: The first stages of the struggle in the Russian party.) Even then I cannot say that I succeed in grasping more than their general and fundamental aspects. That is one reason why I do not venture to write very often on these subjects.



## CANNON'S 'HISTORY' NOT BEST PLACE TO START

On the whole, I think your "Guide to James P. Cannon's Books" (October) is good. But I disagree with the "suggestion about the order in which they can be read by people who are becoming acquainted with Cannon for the first time." It depends on which people. For many who are not already committed Trotskyists, The History of American Trotskyism is not the best place to start -- it can be confusing, or a real turn-off. Parts of it (especially on the Minneapolis strikes) are terrific, but some of it seems very internal, factional, and self-justifying to the uninitiated reader. Much, much better for the person coming to Cannon for the first time is Speeches for Socialism or America's Road to Socialism or Socialism on Trial. Also, it seems to me that the memorial volume on Cannon (James P. Cannon As We Knew Him, Pathfinder Press, 1976, 288 pp.) is wonderful and deserves to be recommended in this context.

Pennsylvanian

## LIKES 'GUIDE TO CANNON BOOKS'

I like the "Guide to James P. Cannon's Books" in No. 23 of your journal, since it will facilitate my further reading of the works of this great Marxist educator. Is there any chance of your publishing a similar guide to Leon Trotsky's books? I realize that would be a bigger job, since Trotsky wrote more, but it also would have bigger educational benefits.

L.V.

Ed. reply: We will investigate the possibility of a Trotsky guide. Watch the Bulletin IDOM for further developments.

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## SLANTING THROUGH OMISSION

I thought you were exaggerating, in your review of the SWP's Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International (Bulletin IDOM No. 19, June 1985), when you asserted that the editors of that book had, through omission and other methods, distorted and idealized some aspects of Lenin's and the Bolsheviks' policies before 1917. I supposed this was your way of showing that if Trotsky had been wrong on some things before 1917, so were others.

But I have been reading a book which makes me think your review may have been more objective than I thought. Its author was Gregory Zinoviev, the name of the book is History of the Bolshevik Party, and it was originally published in 1923 by the Soviet publishing house. At that time, Lenin was in his final sickness, and Zinoviev was chairman of the Communist International. Zinoviev at that time was in an alliance with Stalin against Trotsky, and nobody would ever have called Zinoviev a Trotskyist then. But here is what he wrote in 1923:

"Let us say a few words in passing about the 'democratic republic.' The Bolsheviks had put forth this demand more than once. But looking back we have to admit that we did have some lack of agreement and confusion over this question in 1915-17. Beginning with 1905, we considered that Russia was moving towards a dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry and we therefore posed the question in this way: if our revolution was to be victorious and finally clean out the Augean stables of the Tsarist autocracy, and if it was to take place in an era of incipient revolution in the west it would not only be a democratic one but would become the start of the socialist revolution. In the theses published by the editorial board of Sotsial-Demokrat in 1916 (written by Comrade Lenin) when a wave of revolution was already forming, we were still however talking about a democratic revolution. And it was only when we had noted the profound changes that the imperialist war had brought about both here in Russia and throughout the world, that we finally formulated our platform of the socialist proletarian revolution."

That quotation is from History of the Bolshevik Party, New Park Publications, 1973, pp. 177-8. The correct date when the Lenin theses were printed was October 13, 1915. Lenin's theses are reprinted in Lenin's Struggle (pp. 402-3) but without comment or notice to the reader about their significance.

F.E.



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