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FOR A TROTSKYIST CONGRESS REBUILDING THE U.S. SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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Remember Ben Linder -- Volunteers to Nicaragua!

We now know that Ben Linder, the American engineer working in Nicaragua, was in fact executed by the contras as he lay wounded from a grenade attack. Ben's father, a pathologist, told a news conference on May 5, "The powder burns suggest that he was shot at very close range, possibly two feet or less away. What I am telling you is that they blew his brains out at point-blank range as he lay wounded." Pablo Rosales, a Nicaraguan who was accompanying Linder while both were working on a hydroelectric project, was also executed by the contras. Linder and his comrades were bravely defending Nicaragua against the contras that Ronald Reagan and his secret

government are financing. They join tens of thousands of Nicaraguans who have died at contra hands.

At the news conference, John Linder urged Americans to volunteer by the thousands to go to Nicaragua and work there on projects like his brother had. "More Americans should do what Ben did," he said.

Right! Unionists, young workers, and all those who defend Nicaragua against US intervention...

Volunteer!

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Down with the Secret Government

By DAVID MARK

Even as congressional testimony from the principals involved in an illegal and secret network to arm the contras opens up, steps are being taken by Reagan and the secret government his administration established to extend its paramilitary operations.

Bourgeois politicians are taking steps to preserve the secret government even now. The timely death of William Casey, formerly the director of the CIA, has given a convenient and silent scapegoat to congressional investigators. "Casey did it" is their rallying cry, around which the liberals hope to strike a deal with the Reagan administration. Witnesses called to testify, Secord, Singlaub, and now it appears North as well, all bonafied principals in the murderous band of retired military men and ex-CIA agents that were directed by Reagan through the National Security Council, have taken the cue. One after another they have pointed to Casey as the central figure in the arms deals. And they have implied (though not directly offered evidence) that Reagan also knew and approved of their work.

Our readers may be curious as to why these scoundrels, all criminals even according to capitalist laws (and certainly criminals by any working class standard) have been so willing to implicate their "boss", Reagan, in the schemes. Without directly connecting Reagan to any actions of this secret government, they have all testified that it was their impression that Reagan was aware of the arms deals with the Contras against Nicaragua.

In the face of a weak and vascillating Congress, and with the Democratic party in as much of a crisis as Reagan ("Hart who's he?"), these reactionaries are defending the policy of Reagan, without directly implicating him or themselves in any crimes. In military terms, they are mounting a counter attack. Congress, and the Democratic Party, are obliging them, just as liberals have always played into the hands of reactionaries when faced with a threat from the working class, even if today that threat is more implied than explicit.

Working people must know that this counter attack of the reactionaries is definitely proceeding, and furthermore, that the administration it-

self sees this as an answer to the Congressional investigation.

A new campaign of terror and sabotage is being prepared in Nicaragua. A contra sabotage unit, recently graduated from a "special warfare" course at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, has now infiltrated Nicaragua. "Expect some spectacular raid" said a senior political consultant to the Reagan administration in an interview with the Nation. "They'll blow up a power station or the fuel tanks at Corinto. Then the head of the US Southern Command in Panama will come up to the Hill ... that will be enough to convince the seven anticommunist Southern Democrats in the Senate who already believe in contra aid and who are just waiting for an excuse to back it."

In addition, domestic spying activities against Americans who protest US intervention have been stepped up. According to the Center for Constitutional Rights, FBI agents have questioned more than a hundred Americans returning from visits to Nicaragua, and scores of others who have been involved in protest against Reagan's policies. Responses to Freedom of Information Act requests submitted by the center show that many political groups and coalitions -- including the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), the National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People, the Network in Solidarity with Guatemala -- are all under FBI surveillance or are referenced in FBI files. The Internal Revenue Service has been auditing individuals who travel to Central America on a preferential basis. The Center also has corroborated reports of legal protest organizations that have been the target of informers and burglaries.

These activities, which in most cases are illegal, show the extent to which the Reagan administration is prepared to go in defense of US imperialist intervention in Nicaragua.

Moreover, the response of the Reagan administration to the attack of an Iraqi jet on the USS Stark, fits in to this counter attack. The outfitting of Kuwaiti oil tankers as American flagships is designed to provoke an attack from Iran. Only weeks ago, we were told that administration policy was guided by a desire to normalize relations with Iran. Now, a new campaign of national chauvinism has been begun precisely against Iran, and a military confrontation is being prepared. The reason is twofold: first, it is politically expedient for Reagan to popularize himself with the right wing at this moment, and secondly, because

US imperialism's policy in the Middle East has been to prolong the war between Iraq and Iran in order to further its own interests in the region.

If this is alarming, the fact that the White House now has 50,000 troops on maneuvers in the immediate vicinity of Nicaragua with a commander in chief that is itching to "pull the trigger" should be viewed as a direct threat!

The impeachment of Reagan is a task that can and must be taken up by the working class, mobilized independently to confront this apparatus of bourgeois terror. Responding to this crisis, which is felt by all classes in society -- even imperialism itself -- left liberals have already begun to raise the demand for impeachment. Representative Henry Gonzales (Democrat -- Congressional District in Texas) has already introduced articles of impeachment to the House Judiciary Committee. For the Democrats, however, the threat of impeachment is only one more bargaining chip. Only if confronted by a powerful mobilization of labor and youth would congress bring articles of impeachment against Reagan. We must build such a mobilization to force the impeachment of Reagan.

Other sectors, representing intermediary forces between the working class and the capitalist parties -- radical organizations of the petty bourgeoisie -- have also begun to raise the demand for impeachment. Reflecting this sector, as well as the left wing of the Democratic Party, Nation in an editorial of May 16th, called for articles of impeachment to be brought against Reagan. And in a more promising development, anti-intervention organizations have also taken up the demand for impeachment in some cases.

The point is this, impeachment is no longer a possibility, it is now a process that has begun under the direct influence and initiative of the left wing of the Democratic party and the politicians of the radical petty bourgeoisie. To allow these sectors to lead the struggle around an important democratic demand to expose and dismantle the secret government is to hasten a solution to the crisis that favors the capitalist class.

In principle, there is no difference between taking up the demand for impeachment and building a mobilization to stop congress from voting aid to the contras in the fall -- a demand that we are in favor of without any conditions because it strengthens Nicaragua in its fight against US imperialism and deepens

the crisis of the US government. What is correct is not always what is best, however. This has been the question all along. In and of itself, the impeachment of Reagan would provoke a deep crisis in the American capitalist class. But an independent mobilization in trade unions, by organizations against US intervention, and by working class political organizations would deepen that crisis and lead to a direct confrontation with the secret ap-

paratus of bourgeois terror established by the Reagan administration. This is a confrontation that cannot be avoided, though it can be postponed to the detriment of the working class.

We call on workers and youth everywhere to take up this demand and this call to action:

Stop all Aid to the Contras! Impeach Reagan!

A Candidate of Labor in '88!

For a National Conference to Nominate a Candidate of Labor The crisis of the Reagan administration brings into sharp relief the absence of any working class alternative of a mass character on the political scene for the 1988 presidential elections. But rather than cry about this glaring historic problem for the American working class, we Trotskyists have been fighting for an alternative -- a Labor Party -- for more than forty years. We can see that today, this fight for a working class party based on the trade unions and organizations of the workers, has great importance for the upcoming Presidential elections in 1988.

The justification for the Labor Party tactic, that is, the reason that revolutionary socialists (Trotskyists) advanced a campaign to build such a party in the thirties was the political impasse of the CIO movement, the trade union bureaucracy channeled the powerful movement for industrial unionism into the Democratic party. Today, when any worker can see that the Democratic and Republican parties, the whole capitalist political structure from the moral majority to the liberals, is politically putrefied -- and yet workers have no political alternative of a mass character -- the Labor Party tactic is also thoroughly justified.

This tactic of building a working class party has been developed by the Trotskyist Organization in two significant ways. First, we have forged together with the Revolutionary Workers League an Alliance for a Labor Party. Secondly, in the past elections we have fought for labor candidates or for common campaigns with other parties calling themselves Trotskyists depending on circumstances.

With the present crisis, and the beginnings of a resurgence in the mass movement in the United States, these two tactics need to come together -- and to enter the mass arena that is opening up!

As a means of preparing tactically for the 1988 elections, and as a way to open up the debate on program, party, and tactics to the widest possible audience in the working class, the Trotskyist Organization proposes that the fight for Labor Candidates go forward first by winning other organizations calling themselves Trotskyist and that also advocate a labor party, to the ALP. Furthermore, we propose that these organizations, whether or not they agree to build the ALP issue a call for a National Conference for a Labor Candidate and a Labor Platform in the 1988 elections.

We are advancing this proposal not as a means of determining beforehand the platform and candidate that we will support, but rather in order to make this selection a struggle as massive and open as possible. For example, in the past we have had polemics with other organizations over the class character of the Peace and Freedom Party in California. While we maintain our view that the PFP is not the working class party we seek to build, and that therefore the task is not, per se, to build the PFP -- nevertheless, we want the PFP and all of its supporters to build this national conference, to participate in it, and thereby, to define itself in relation to all the important questions facing American workers. The same goes for trade unions, both official and rank-and-file endorsement, and to organizations in opposition to US intervention in Central America.

We repeat. Now when the capitalist class is in crisis, when it is actively preparing its own alternative to Reaganism, the working class must not be deprived of an alternative in the 1988 elections. In fighting for a National Conference for a Labor Candidate and a Labor Platform workers and young people will know that there was a struggle for such an alternative, and they will know how every organization of the working class defined itself in relation to this struggle.

All Out Labor Day -- Stop GM Plant Closures

Industry-wide Strike of Auto!

By Barbara Putnam

Since GM announced plans to close a number of its operations and layoff some 29,000 workers, a movement has begun to develop against the plant closures. Ramifications of the plant closures -- the devastation of whole cities and creation of truly barbaric conditions is becoming evident to ever wider layers of the population. Every worker, every working class leadership is called upon to fully enter this movement and fight for its victory. No indifference, apathy, nor empty sloganeering can be tolerated. Above all, we cannot let the fight against plant closures enter the elephant burial ground of the Democratic Party as did the fight against the closure of Dodge Main behind the Democrat's bail-out Chrysler scheme in the "Save Chrysler" campaign.

Defeat GM's Plant Closings -- Industry-wide Strike!

All tactics and methods that inspire the workers, that give them confidence in their independent forms of struggle are positive, all methods that limit, suppress, or contain such developments should be discarded forthwith. This is a good rule of thumb for deciding what are good and what are not good tactics for fighting the plant closures.

There are plenty of proposals floating around for what to do next, but the problem is that since January, the movement against the plant closures has not found a unitary method for linking up the many initiatives. On May 9, a rally to discuss strategy against the plant closings was held in Flint. About 300 unionists and working class militants attended the full day session. But nothing concrete came out of the meeting. It was possible right then and there to decide on a date for one mass action that would begin to solidify the many disparate efforts and present a united front against the bosses. But the World Workers Party (WWP) leaders who had the biggest hand in deciding on the format of the meeting tended to counterpose their proposal for a legalistic Congressional Moratorium against plant closures and support to John Conyers, a Black, liberal Democrat, and keynote speaker, to the workers own methods -- a strike of auto.

This was divisive and shut out militant workers who wanted to discuss the strike as the key element of a strategy. Nearly two-thirds of those present responded by standing up and shouting together "Strike All Three!" after a worker from Ford Local 600 made that proposal. Yet, the WWP people chairing the meeting did not grasp the significance and clumsily responded by saying that the strike is not here yet and the Moratorium is something we can do right now.

Our proposal to the meeting was for it to consider agitation for an industry-wide strike against all three automakers in the fall and a strong effort to build democratic strike support committees in other unions, in community organizations and on the campuses as a way to win over the largest support for the fight against plant closures and the best way to win and defeat the plant closings. We do not counterpose this struggle to the call for a Congressional Moratorium, but the only way Congress will really be forced to pass legislation that benefits workers is through the organized strength of the mass movement; a national strike of auto being the most forceful way to express this organized strength.

Workers democracy is the way workers can control their own movement. Full freedom in discussion and complete solidarity in action is the best way to involve all the fighters and cohere the mass movement. This was certainly true in the recent, victorious student strike in France. The French students won the support of the entire ranks of the labor movement. Collectively, they threatened a general strike against the government and forced it to withdraw reactionary legislation affecting the universities. In their mass assemblies of thousands, the students were able to elect candidates they considered to best represent their demands and mandate them to carry out the will of the assembly -- if anybody elected did not do this, they were summarily replaced with better leaders. This led to the total solidarity needed to defeat the governmental legislation.

But few could have been impressed with the undemocratic way WWP handled the Flint meet-

ing. One of our members was the sole delegate from Local 2071 of the UAW from Wayne State University and simply wanted to present a message of support from the local to the meeting and as well wanted to say that in her opinion an industry-wide strike is a realistic perspective. Yet the WWP chair refused to call on her during the lengthy discussion period. This led a unionist from a New York UAW local to protest the exclusion. WWP's sectarian response was to tell this unionist their reason for not allowing our comrade to speak was because they recognized her as being a member of a different organization ("some League"). A whole contingent of Local 22 UAW delegates left halfway through the conference because they said the rest of the day would only be a repetition of what had already been said.

A proposal for a march on Lansing to address the Governor and state legislature came up and got a positive response. After this was discussed awhile, workers began to get agitated and call out of turn "Set the date!" and also sent notes to the chair. But the chair said there were too many logistical problems to actually organize the march right then and the meeting broke up with nothing concrete being decided.

Labor Day March Against Plant Closings

But on May 20, a threatened GM local in Detroit, Local 22 of the UAW, called a meeting of union presidents and officers to talk about the plant closings. Our comrade from Local 2071 attended the meeting. It was a good sign that leaders of a couple of community organizations were present and spoke in favor of fighting along side the autoworkers against the plant closings. There are a number of committees set up in union locals already and many more need to be established. Although a representative from Conyers office was there, the meeting did not revolve around Conyers "A Job is Right Campaign" nor the Congressional Moratorium. Rather, the major part of the meeting went to discussing concrete action to draw all the initiatives together. There was a very positive response to the idea of developing agitation for a national strike of auto in the fall and for mass action to put the various initiatives in place. M.L. Douglas, the president of Local 22 proposed a large demonstration on Labor Day just days before the Ford and GM contract expirations. Most importantly, the meeting took the decision to begin a struggle for Labor Day not to be just a routine parade, but rather a militant march against the plant closings. This is the kind of unitary activity needed to cohere all

the various initiatives and would support any actions the threatened locals want to take.

(Below is reprinted a leaflet distributed by the Trotskyist Organization at the Cadillac and Fleetwood plants in Detroit during June)

Stop the Plant Closings! All Out Labor Day! Strike GM and Ford!

Toward an Industry-wide Strike to Stop the Closings!

Fellow Workers!

In the last few weeks, UAW Locals 22 (Cadillac), 15 (Fleetwood) and 2071 (Wayne State) have all decided to try to make the Michigan Labor Day March in Detroit into a march against the plant closings.

We ask all working class organizations to support this initiative. In particular, we ask all unionists to fight for their locals to adopt resolutions supporting UAW Locals 22, 15 and 2071's initiative to make the Labor Day March a march against the plant closings and to come to the march with banners saying: Stop the Plant Closings!

UAW Local 22 is sponsoring a meeting to discuss how to carry forward this struggle on Friday, July 17, at 5 p.m. We urge all working class organizations, especially unions, to bring messages of support and participate in this meeting.

At the same time, it is necessary to fight for a united strike against GM and Ford (whose

contract expires September 14, 1987) as a first step in an industrywide strike to stop the plant closings. This is the only language the bosses understand.

We are for a congressional moratorium on plant closings. But we do not support John Conyers' legislation, which doesn't call for a moratorium, only for the bosses to show cause and give notice. As far as we are concerned, there is no legitimate reason, under any circumstances, for throwing a worker and his family into the streets. Nor are we for relying on John Conyers, or any other Republicans or Democrats, to lead this fight. The workers must rely on themselves. That means a fight for a united strike against GM and Ford, for an industry-wide strike, to stop the closings.

We are also for labor candidates and a labor party to advance these goals, especially in the 1988 elections. But it is sectarian to make being for labor candidates, or a labor party, a precondition for a common fight against the plant closings.

All working class organizations must make a common fight to stop the plant closings, for a victorious strike against GM and Ford to win this demand!

Please contact us and let us know if you support this struggle and plan to help build it.

Trotskyist Organization Fraternal Section, Fourth International P.O. Box 32546 Detroit, Michigan 48232 Phone: 542-7445.

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Class Struggle in America

While there have been a number of important events since the beginning of May -- the US sponsored murder of Ben Linder, an engineer helping the Nicaraguans defend their revolution, the revelations of the Iran-Contra hearings -- there have been some key developments in the working class movement against concessions. This month we will focus on the most important of these struggles.

There are 800 workers on strike at Sioux City, Iowa, Morrell meat-packing plant, members of UFCW 1142. These workers sent roving pickets to another Morrell plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, about 90 miles away. The roving pickets shut down this facility of 2,500 on May 1. Morrell, South Dakota's largest single employer, hired 500 scabs to replace the striking Sioux Falls workers. State militia were called out to stop the roving pickets and allow the scabs to go in.

Talks have broken down in the original strike in Sioux City because the UFCW has insisted that a condition for settling is the rehiring of all the workers who honored the roving picket line.

In March, and again in April, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) fined Morrell a total of over \$700,000 for consciously misrepresenting the number of injuries that took place in its plants.

In early June, Teamsters struck a major liquor distribution firm, Don Lee, in Dearborn, Michigan. The strike has spread and the workers are selectively closing facilities in order to win a victory against Don Lee. The workers are striking over a proposed 20% cut in wages.

On May 3, over 3,000 GM Norwood workers (represented by UAW Local 674) and their supporters marched against the closing of the plant by GM at the end of August. These workers also recently voted to give \$10,000 to striking US Playing Card workers (RWDSU Local 256). The UAW international leadership stopped the donation and workers collected money at the plant gates. The US Playing Card workers are striking over proposed wage/benefit cuts of \$4 an hour.

On May 12, United Steelworkers of America (USWA) local presidents voted 16 to 14 to

reject the "final" offer from LTV Steel. The contract had been previously approved by the international leadership. The company wants to reopen the 1986 contract, cut 600 more jobs through increasing workloads and maintain the slashes in the pension fund set up last summer when LTV filed for bankruptcy. Any contract that is signed must be approved by a Federal bankruptcy judge in New York City, as well as LTV big bank creditors.

In May, the UAW Public Review Board overturned the trusteeship placed on Local 25 in St. Louis, home of the "New Directions" head, Jerry Tucker. Tucker narrowly lost re-election on an anti-concessions platform in an unfair election. This is the first time in recent history that the Public Review Board has overturned such an important decision.

USX, former US Steel Corporation, was just fined \$65,000 by the OSHA for "willfully failing to record" lost time injuries such as burns and debilitating eye injuries.

The Moral Cynicism of the Sectarians

(The article below was translated from the newspaper of the Spanish Section of the Fourth International (PORE), *La Aurora*, March 4-12, 1987 in response to a letter they received from the WRP (Workers Revolutionary Party of Britain) asking the PORE's position on the jailing of a WRP militant, Phil Penn, through Healy's and Co.'s testimony against him.)

A letter from the WRP of Britain arrived at our office asking our position on the jailing of one of their militants as a result of testimony against him by various members of an expelled faction, that of Gerry Healy. It is one of those cases of a question of a disgraceful **lack of principle** in a political dispute between working class organizations. These cases are frequent. The workers know it and are disgusted. They begin to lose confidence in all political dispute and come to think that such unprincipled methods are the norm, but that is, as the French say, the same as "throwing the baby out with the dirty bath water." Without political struggle between the working class tendencies, there can be no progress in class consciousness nor, for that matter, in the struggle against the bourgeoisie. But lies, invoking bourgeois justice, provocations, etc., are not fitting methods of struggle inside the workers movement. They are methods that only disgust and demoralize the proletarian combatants.

There are parties which, for that very reason, are silent about such methods, covering them up, and so forth. Others, from the great heights of their saintly morals, stand neutral, condemn some or all those who use such methods but after all is said and done, wash their hands of it. Our position is active!

The working class has its own morals. Not that of priests nor gangsters: it is a class morality which instead of representing a weight or a burden, is a factor of progress in the revolutionary consciousness of the workers; an arm. "Those methods are good," wrote Trotsky in "Their morals and Ours," which permit "increased cohesion of the proletariat, train it to despise official morality and its democratic servants, permeates its consciousness with its own historic mission, augmenting its boldness and its selflessness." These are class moral principles, and more concretely, revolutionary moral principles.

Stalinism and Its Methods

After Lenin's death, including in his last days, Stalin's faction maintained revolutionary principles in the framework of the cynicism of bureaucrats who misidentify their privileges, personal circumstances and their caste with the historical interests of the oppressed. If Bolshevism has proven an intransigence without equal in the polemic of ideas, Stalinism has turned the polemic of ideas into systemic slander of adversaries, falsification of ideas, censoring of the truth, and persecution of critics. If Bolshevism zealously defended the party's borders in front of opportunists, inconsistent and confusionists, on the other hand Stalinism declared as class enemies, without any nuances nor considerations, all working class militants in organizations other than theirs, with the exception of their friends with bourgeois ways, those the bureaucrats of the workers movement are always ready to praise. Bolshevism has been the party of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Stalinism the party of gangster terrorism and political police. The damage done to the international workers movement has been immense and yet we must ask ourselves how much time will it take this generation of workers to conquer that bitter heritage, how much time to raise up a great world workers movement based on solid Marxist principles, those which, as Trotsky wrote: Stalin revised "not with a pen, but with the boots of the GPU."

Stalinism began the method of slander, aggression and assassination versus the opposition of ideas within the ranks of the proletariat. Trotsky, the Trotskyists and the IV International received much harder blows. Today the Stalinists have base morals and they less than anybody are in a position to resort to the methods which were their trademark in the thirties. Better hope they are forgotten. A long time ago Stalinist gangsterism retreated where the CP [Communist Party...trans.] was in the opposition, and now it is in crisis in China, Eastern Europe and in the USSR itself.

The Centrists and Their Methods

But to differentiate ourselves from the democrats and the priests, we do not reject such methods in the name of human fraternity, of a reconciliation of adversaries, or in order to water down a political struggle. On the contrary! We want to free the class strug-

gle from its chains, and the struggle of ideas from its snares: to construct a party and form its cadres in a spirit of a partisan, selfless intransigence, closing ranks against the bourgeoisie and the opportunist tendencies in the ranks of the workers. And, yes, it so happens that, in order to do this, we must draw a clear line of delimitation between polemics and slander between political criticism and police provocation, between self-defense and gangsterism, between the adversary of ideas and enemies of the class, etc., etc.

But at the same time that Stalinist police terrorism recedes, the centrist groups disperse since they have been navigating without a compass in the crisis of the IV International over the last fifty years. This has resulted in an incapacity to maintain a **clear line of delimitation** between one thing and another. The most conciliatory of these groups totally reject lively and energetic political discussion, and qualify as "sectarianism" and even as "slander" all that which is not compromising and diplomatic. They smother the struggle of ideas between factions and groups, without which there is no life nor any construction of an authentic revolutionary party.

Even worse is the case of other venerable "historic chiefs" of Trotskyism, who have rapidly slipped down the bottomless pit of slander and aggression, intent on passing off as intransigent politics the most flaky stratagems against political adversaries. For example, the case of Healy in Britain where he put himself forward as a medium to the police who are always anxious to sniff out something between revolutionaries.

Pierre Lambert--and so it is each time more well-known, because those who were silenced for so many years began to speak up--he accused our then comrade, Michel Varga, a Hungarian revolutionary, of being a "double agent", "financed" "by the KGB and the CIA." This, simply because we had political disagreements with Lambert over the future of the Fourth International! On the pretense of sparing himself the discussion, since after all, "he doesn't discuss with agents": insults, blows, the fingering of exiled politicians, was Lambert's language. Later on he had disagreements with the OP [Workers Party--trans.] of Argentina, and denounced its leaders as "guard dogs of the Videla dictatorship." Or, when he broke with the Argentine PST [Socialist Workers Party--trans.] sometime afterwards, the same Lambert said his comrade, the Peruvian senator Ricardo Napuri had "sold out to the bourgeoisie." In general terms, each one of these tendencies, which did not stand up against the previous

slanders, had already been **slandered** by the time disagreements became evident. Let the reader judge what conclusions the thinking revolutionary could draw from these discussions between "agents," "guard dogs" and "sell-outs"!

And the working class militant shouldn't be upset if we seem to waste time and paper on such uninspiring themes. It is because we are absolutely sure we will successfully rid ourselves of the lamentable heritage of these opportunists, separate the wheat from the chafe in Trotskyism. We are interested in airing the question in order to mobilize the revolutionary Trotskyist youth to shout, "No More!"

Sectarianism and Slander

The Englishman, Gerry Healy, like Lambert cited above, crossed over that line post haste which separates polemical excesses and sectarianism, apologetics from premeditated slanderous police accusations, launched with the political goal of destroying an adversary. For years he accused the leadership of the historic Trotskyist party of the United States [the Socialist Workers Party--trans.] of being manipulated by the FBI. And this same Healy, at the high point of his career was expelled from his own party for "sexual abuses, violence and slander," and in face of having to quit the scene he brought on tribunals and jail for his old comrades, working class militants. Tell us reader the kind of Marxist education we can expect from a battle over "agents of the FBI," "sexual abuses" and judgments in front of capitalist judges and police...

What is needed is to get to the bottom of the question, not to substitute political struggle with "homeopathic ethics", [i.e., treating the disease by administering a remedy that produces symptoms of the disease--trans.] but in order to seek out on the one hand, political problems which are driven underground by the methods cited, and on the other hand, to entirely cut off these methods, condemn out loud and to all the world those who use gangster cynicism inside the ranks of the revolutionary proletariat.

Healy's slanders (including his abuses) found their political basis in the sectarianism of his line of years and even decades long. Not that we are saying sectarianism is the only reason for the slanders. There are sectarians who do not slander anybody, and there are slanderers who do not have a particle of sectarianism but much conciliation. What we are saying is that Healy's slanders (and his abuses) could only have existed **inside** an organization of honest and active revolutionaries linked to

the workers, thanks to the **sectarianism** permeating its political conceptions.

Once I had the occasion to see Healy, because I was part of a delegation which in 1973 interviewed with him to collaborate on unitary campaigns, in spite of our evident disagreements. We formed the delegation, a comrade of the Hungarian section, another from the Moroccan section, and me from the Spanish section, which sometime before had separated from the Healy Spanish partisans. After we presented ourselves, Healy immediately noted that my two comrades "without doubt were residing in exile," by that meaning they hardly existed. Since this was not the case with me, he simply decided not to see me, nor speak to me, nor question me during the whole time of the interview. I interpreted this to mean that what he meant was "you don't exist," not for him, nor did the problems that arose around the split with the Spanish group.

Sectarians do not recognize true political adversaries. Nobody would go looking in their press for that kind of factional polemic with which Lenin delimited, regrouped and prepared the revolutionary leadership of the Russian proletariat. Lenin never overlooked a single enemy, no matter how lowly, nor did he forget a single consistent argument just because he had a small audience.

For Lambert, for Healy, for Mandel, for Lora, and other shipwrecked persons from the crises of the IV International, their adversaries are to be passed over in silence, or to be loudly slandered: after all, there is **nothing** to discuss with them. What great men they must be, and how many abuses and caprices they will not have to rectify, these leaders who in turn are rejected, just as they reject others, as sellouts, agents, guard dogs, greedy ones, bureaucrats and stupid people! Can it surprise us then that **fifty years** after the foundation of the IV International with methods other than those of Healy we have advanced so little in its construction, including in projecting a leadership with authority over the vanguard of the workers international? This aspect, that of the relationship between sectarianism and cynical methods, has scarcely been dealt with by the implicated organizations: the same WRP, which lived down these methods, and expelled their principal instigator, has not yet come to grips with the political basis upon which Healy's methods developed.

An International Tribunal

This question acquires importance for the actual prospects of an immediate Open International Conference. We--the IV International rebuilt in 1976--have made such a call. Another proposal for a World Conference came from the CIR [International Committee for Reconstruction--trans.] of Lambert, but it **deliberately** excludes groups that lay claim to the IV International and which oppose Lambert's claim to it. The WRP of Britain had called for a sufficiently open Conference earlier this year. The LIT [International Workers League] of the late Argentine revolutionary, Moreno, apparently sides with the latest proposal of the WRP, and we had already decided to participate in that one and give it as open a character as possible. The question of the slanders is now rooted in this framework.

It would be an error to exclude from this Conference groups or leaderships which have employed such cynical methods, because the question of methods must be a first rate question if we want to avoid turning the construction of the party into a building a League of Good Manners. And the political struggle must demand, without concessions, nor exceptions: **Down with sectarianism and diplomacy!** On the other hand the Conference can and should have--and it seems **will have**--to create in its womb an international **tribunal of honor** (with the natural authority given it by the number, influence and implantation of the organizations that vote for it) to which all militants and working class groups will have recourse against methods which are foreign to the workers movement.

The Open Conference and the WRP

By MARGARET GUTTSALL

Over two months have passed and the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) still has not made any sort of public explanation for why it excluded us from the "Preparatory Committee" for the international conference, in which it had invited us to participate. The "Interim Secretariat," composed of representatives of the WRP (Bob Archer) and the International Workers League (IWL, Leon Perez), sent us a short note. It suggests that we did not want to participate! We've published it below so readers can see for themselves.

In reality, the WRP excluded virtually every tendency that claims to be Trotskyist, outside its small circle -- the IWL and the Group of Opposition and Continuity of the Fourth International (GOCFI, led by Michel Varga) -- because it is turning its back on the rest of the vanguard, particularly the United Secretariat and the International Center for Reconstruction (ICR, led by Pierre Lambert) and the oppositions within them. It prefers to fuse with the IWL and the GOCFI -- which represent only a tiny fraction of the vanguard organized largely around an Argentine organization and Michel Varga respectively -- and proclaim another International.

Illusions

The WRP may have realized that Healy's "International Committee" represented a break with the real International Committee, that Healy's "International Committee" was in reality no International at all. Yet it is still suffering under the illusion that it is possible to build the International outside a fundamental political struggle in the vanguard against Stalinism and centrism, outside a selection on this basis in the living movement of the working class and its vanguard.

The WRP is still suffering under the illusion that it is sufficient to gather together a few groups and proclaim an International. It is still suffering under the illusion that political struggle simply means denouncing everyone else.

This is why the WRP opposes our fight for an open conference. It can't imagine a real political struggle taking place in such a conference. It can't imagine a process of clarification, selection, and real formation of cadres in a living political struggle, the kind of struggle

in which the International, as a leadership, as an organism in the working class, is forged.

It can only imagine denouncing everyone else and going off in a corner. Or, worse yet, being confused, making mistakes, maybe even doing what it considers capitulating. So it figures, better not, let's play it safe, let's go with the IWL and Varga. Maybe later we'll take the plunge.

Justifications

In order to justify turning its back on the rest of the vanguard, the WRP either ignores developments taking place in the class struggle or misrepresents them.

This is manifest in its Special Congress Resolution, which was adopted by a national conference called to discuss the international conference April 4, 1987 and was published in Workers Press, No. 70, April 11, 1987.

This resolution says virtually nothing about recent developments in the international class struggle or even in England -- the Reagan administration's crisis, the Kremlin bureaucracy's crisis, Gorbachev's reforms, Thatcher's crisis, the British Labor Party, the French student strike and its counterparts in other countries, the protests in China, the USSR, etc. Nor does it say much about the most recent developments in the vanguard -- the crisis of the United Secretariat, Barnes' support to Gorbachev's reforms, Krivine's proposal to unify with a Stalinist faction, "the renovators," the oppositions within the United Secretariat, the International Center for Reconstruction and its call for an international conference to proclaim the reconstruction of the Fourth International, the tensions between the Europeans and Latin Americans in the ICR, etc., etc. Stalinism and Pabloism

With respect to Stalinism, the resolution says simply: "... the Stalinist bureaucracy 'definitely passed over to the side of the bourgeois order.'" This is true enough, albeit a bit brief, given all the developments. It also says: "Stalinism ... 'the most counter-revolutionary agency in the workers' movement.'" Also true enough, although we hope comrades do not conclude from this that the imperialist labor bureaucracy or Social Democracy is any better.

Yet when it comes to the question of Pabloism and the United Secretariat the resolution says: "The liquidationist tendencies inside the Fourth International, beginning with Pablo ... transmitted the pressure of Stalinism, which needed to try to destroy Bolshevism, into the Fourth International itself. Thus the content of Pabloism was essentially the same as Stalinism."

Stalinism and Pabloism have the same content, says the WRP! But Trotsky, and Trotskyists, have long distinguished Stalinism and centrism (not because he or we are pedants, but because in order to seize power the working class needs to be able to distinguish between a counterrevolutionary tendency and centrist tendencies that run the gamut from hardened centrists to semi-revolutionary tendencies). If we are to take the WRP resolution seriously, we must conclude that Pabloism too has "definitely passed over to the side of the bourgeois order" and is, alongside Stalinism, "the most counter-revolutionary agency in the workers' movement."

When and where did this event take place? When and where did Pabloism acquire the same place in the working class that Stalinism has or begin to play the same role? With the stroke of a pen the WRP writes off the largest portion of tendencies that claim to be Trotskyist as having "definitely passed over to the side of the bourgeois order," as "the most counter-revolutionary agency in the workers' movement."

It is interesting that Lambert's International Center for Reconstruction recently declared the same thing -- that the Pabloist United Secretariat had passed over to the side of the bourgeois order -- and with virtually the same motivation -- to say that there's no need to wage a political struggle with them, we can call a conference open only to ourselves and proclaim the Fourth International.

World Trotskyism Polarized?

Later on the resolution refers to "World Trotskyism" and says: "The anti-Trotskyist policies of the United Secretariat in the 1970s prepared the way directly to the open rejection of permanent revolution and Trotskyism by leaders of the SWP in the US ... Developments in the WRP took their place in this world polarisation of the Trotskyist movement. On the one side are the degenerations, the revisions and the capitulations, the betrayals, and on the other side are the forces reflecting movements in the working class, seeking to resolve the crisis of leadership in struggle

against bureaucracy, and truly showing the continuity of the Fourth International."

First, there is no such thing as "World Trotskyism" or the world Trotskyist movement. This is indeed a Pabloist conception. There are many different tendencies that claim to be Trotskyist, yet they are not all Trotskyist. Some of these tendencies are hard centrist tendencies. Others are semi-revolutionary. Still others are not yet clearly defined.

A political struggle to clarify Trotskyist principles, to test different principles, lines and leaderships is necessary to separate true Trotskyists from centrists in the living movement of the working class, to build Trotskyism in the working class.

The idea that this "polarisation" has already taken place -- that "on one side are the degenerations, the revisions and the capitulations ... on the other side are the forces ... seeking to resolve the crisis of leadership" -- simply is not true.

Everyone knows, or should know, that there has been one opposition tendency after another within the United Secretariat. Because they are still part of the United Secretariat (and, by the way, we think it's correct to pursue a fight to the finish within the United Secretariat) should we write them all off as rubbish, as part of the "degenerations, the revisions and the capitulations" as the resolution suggests?

Let us remember, comrades, when the WRP was knee-deep in trying to find evidence to prove that Hansen and Barnes were police agents, tendencies inside the United Secretariat and outside the United Secretariat were trying to wage a political struggle against Barnes. The WRP still has not carefully examined this development, taken up Barnes' texts, polemicized against them, etc. And we think this is a pretty important question, especially for the WRP, whose major leaders, Healy and Banda, have also aligned themselves with Stalinism, and, in Banda's case, abandoned Trotskyism openly. Isn't it interesting that Barnes, Healy and Banda all support Gorbachev's reforms?

What is more, everyone knows, or ought to know, that there are plenty of tendencies outside the United Secretariat that are not part of the WRP or the IWL. Are they all part of "the degenerations, the revisions and the capitulations, the betrayals," too?

To try to prove this point, a certain section of the WRP leadership has initiated a campaign to try to identify the Fourth International (rebuilt) with Pabloism. Cliff Slaughter recently published an article that says basically this in Tasks of the Fourth International. The WRP leadership also printed an article by Janos Borovi from the GOCFI that said the same thing and even went so far as to say we tried to destroy the East European sections of the Fourth International! And this is what they put on paper. WRP members have not only told us we have a Pabloite position on Stalinism, they have also said we think we are the sole continuity of the Fourth International, that we only want to rip-off members from other parties, we abused Michel Varga, etc., etc.

But just because Healy, Banda and others had Pabloite positions on Stalinism, thought that their organization was the sole continuity, only wanted to rip-off other parties, and abused members and non-members alike, including Michel Varga whom they abandoned to Lambert's slanders, does not mean that we did or do the same.

We urge everyone to study our publications and find the truth for themselves. Do not just believe whatever you hear. As Lenin said: "Whoever believes things simply on someone else's say-so is a hopeless idiot ..."

In reality, the Fourth International (rebuilt) and its struggle are living proof that there is something outside the WRP and the IWL besides "the degenerations, the revisions, etc." But instead of changing the analysis and the orientation to fit the facts, some prefer to change the facts to fit the "analysis."

No comrades, it just is not the case that all the "degenerations" are on one side (the United Secretariat) and all the struggles "to resolve the crisis of leadership" are on the other side (the WRP and the IWL). The political struggle to differentiate Trotskyism from centrism, to separate healthy Trotskyist forces from centrist forces, is not yet over. It has just begun.

WRP says: Divide Trotskyists!

Piling confusion on confusion, after referring to "World Trotskyism," which doesn't exist, after telling us that within "World Trotskyism," a polarization has already taken place between degenerate, revisionist, capitulationist, and treacherous forces on one side, and forces "seeking to resolve the crisis of leadership ... and truly showing the continuity of the Fourth In-

ternational" on the other, the WRP tells us: "We have to divide and unify the Trotskyist forces internationally on these principles. Our Call must divide as well as unite tendencies in the world Trotskyist movement."

How in the world can a working class militant understand what the WRP is talking about? Why should we try to divide Trotskyist forces? Imperialists and Stalinists try to divide Trotskyist forces, not Trotskyists. Fine, let us grant that this is just a poor formulation, that the WRP is really talking about the international vanguard or forces that claim to be Trotskyist. But it says that a polarization has already taken place, that the degenerates are on one side and the good guys are on the other. So what's to divide? If the polarization has already taken place, what is there to divide?

Perhaps the WRP thinks that there are still some ties between the two poles, what it needs to do is cut them and everything will be fine. Indeed the resolution goes on to suggest this.

"The Call seeks to rally [our emphasis] all those forces in the world today attempting to resolve ... the crisis of working class leadership. With this call we have taken an important step ... in laying down the principles on which the reorganization can take place."

But the fundamental task before Trotskyists today is not to rally forces seeking to resolve the crisis of leadership. Our task is to define a political orientation for the vanguard and the class as a whole, fight for it, select and train a leadership on this basis. The conception the WRP puts forward is spontaneist.

What is more, it's not sufficient to "lay down principles," an expression that the WRP resolution uses more than once. It's necessary to fight for them, in the living movement of the working class and its vanguard. This, too, is a spontaneist conception -- lay down principles, see who accepts them, then accept and reject applications.

To sum up: The WRP's analysis and line, expressed in its Special Congress resolution -- that Stalinism and Pabloism have the same content, that a polarization has already taken place with the degenerations on one side and the healthy forces on the other, that now it is simply necessary to completely divide these two poles and rally one side against the other by laying down principles -- is a justification for its abandonment of a political struggle

with other tendencies, particularly the United Secretariat and the International Center of Reconstruction, to clarify Trotskyist principles in opposition to Stalinism and centrism, to unify healthy Trotskyist forces on this basis, and build the Fourth International.

A Lesson to Learn

One thing that we of the Trotskyist Organization of the USA have learned in over a decade of struggle to rebuild and build the Fourth International, to rebuild its U.S. Section, is that there is no way to do this outside a fundamental political struggle in the vanguard. We hope that the WRP can learn from this experience, that it can take it seriously, not

simply dismiss it or try to discredit it behind closed doors.

We urge all tendencies seriously concerned with resolving the problems of building the Fourth International to continue the fight for an international conference, open to all tendencies with roots in Trotskyism and the Fourth International, to clarify Trotskyist principles, to forge practical agreements to advance these principles, to begin to unify, strengthen and enlarge healthy Trotskyist forces. This struggle is not over. It has just begun. And we are sure that support for it will grow, in the United Secretariat, in the International Center for Reconstruction, in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, and, yes, in the WRP and the IWL!

Letter from Preparations Committee

Below is reprinted the letter received from the Interim Secretariat of the Preparations Committee.

Workers Revolutionary Party
P.O. Box 735
London SW9 7QS
Britain
Tel: 01 274 7271

International Executive Committee
Fourth International (Reconstructed)
BP 205
75524 Paris Cedex 11
FRANCE

1/5/1987 (May 1, 1987)

Dear Comrades,

This is to explain the position on your comrades participation in the Preparatory Committee.

In the period before the constitution of the preparatory committee, the WRP expressed reservations about some of the criticisms you made in your publications of the Call for an International Conference.

On April 9, Comrade Alain Cavalier proposed to Comrade Bob Archer that your delegation should participate as observers in the Committee.

At the meeting to constitute the preparatory committee, this proposal was conveyed by Comrade Archer.

However, those present decided that there should be no observers at meeting of the Preparatory Committee.

Your fraternally,

R.A. Archer for the Interim Secretariat

Copy to Cde. Margaret Guttshall

Another!

(Translated from La Aurora, newspaper of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario de Espagne, Spanish section of the Fourth International)

Mike Banda was, with Gerry Healy, the leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party of England, the historic organization of the Trotskyists of this country. Months ago, Healy, the founder, theoretician and leader of the organization was expelled by a revolt of the ranks against his methods, abuses, and many of his sectarian ideas. Shortly thereafter, Healy stood out, without even having his currently miniscule faction's support, by aligning Trotskyism's name, which he abuses more than he abuses people, to the current Kremlin leadership's policy.

Mike Banda abandoned the WRP shortly after participating in Healy's expulsion. Banda openly attacks Trotsky and Trotskyism, which he represented for years at the head of a strong English workers' organization.

This organization, the WRP, should seriously analyze in all its significance a fact of these dimensions. What, in the policy of years and years of the WRP, prepared and explains such rapid, such thunderous, capitulations of its historic leaders before Stalinism?

In a letter to the Ceylonese Trotskyist, Edmund Samarakkody, Mike Banda explains to him:

"... Next week I will send you a copy of my intervention on the anniversary of the Soviet revolution. In order to avoid confusions I want to clarify that my support to Gorbachev's reforms does not imply support to the policy of "peaceful transition via the parliamentary road" nor to peaceful coexistence as opposed to proletarian nationalism."

Another! This tries to separate the Kremlin's internal policy from its external policy, its role in the defense of capitalist states through the Communist Partys' line, from its role in the Soviet Union as objective agency of imperialism within the workers state degenerated by the bureaucratic cancer. To understand what a devil is this famous anti-Marxist theory of the "dual nature of the bureaucracy," here we have one of its variants, one in which the bureaucracy could be progressive in the USSR and reactionary for the international proletariat. There are those who affirm the contrary, no

less false. There are those who find "progressive" and "counterrevolutionary" aspects in its role in the USSR as well as in its international role. There are those who see the Kremlin as "counterrevolutionary," but see its head Gorbachev as "progressive."

But the truth rests in the unity of all these aspects, that is to say the unity that exists between its role as factor of order under capitalism on the world scale, and its role as totalitarian and privileged usurper of the socialist conquests; between its policy's conservative and anti-working class goals, and the ties which through the inertia of the past it retains with the movements of the masses at the head of which it is found; between the interests of the bureaucratic caste, and the "reform" operation undertaken by Gorbachev. There are contradictions between all these terms, but no "dual nature"; there are contradictions within a nunityl, which consists in the fact that the Kremlin bureaucracy passed a long time ago to the side of the bourgeois order and defends it as the guarantee of its own caste privileges.

Translated from La Aurora, No. 523, April 2-8, 1987

The FIT's Response to SWP --

"The Barnes leadership had never really conquered the Marxist methodology . . ."

By FRED MICHAELS

Thus does Steve Bloom, one of three national coordinators of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT), one of the expelled oppositions of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), analyze the reason for the problems of the SWP in the last 25 years. Bloom is writing in response to a report by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the SWP, to its National Committee reprinted in the *The Militant* of March 20, 1987.

Barnes' Report

For our part, Barnes' report is significant because it represents a response of the SWP to the Reagan crisis and the turn in the class struggle.

The report does not come to grips with the Reagan crisis. The SWP still does not advocate any particular political response -- neither impeachment, nor the Labor Party. There is no development of working class independence. The report describes the turn in the class struggle as a "transitional" period. The only conclusion drawn is that the SWP will now concentrate on coal miners, another in an endless stream of "hot spots" in the class struggle that Barnes has discovered."

Finally, Barnes gets excited by the Anti-Imperialist Organization of the Caribbean and Central America, including Castro, Sandinistas, etc. In this organization, Barnes finds hope for his "new International." In other words, Barnes may be setting up the SWP for yet another capitulation, an abandonment of even more of the principles of the that the SWP stood for when it represented Trotskyism in the United States (in the period after its foundation in 1938 to its reunification with the Pablites in 1963).

A Positive Change?

Bloom's article is entitled, "Where is the SWP Going?" The answer for the FIT: farther away from being a revolutionary leadership than ever. Why? Because "the Barnes leadership never really conquered the Marxist methodology . . ."

At first glance, to those concerned about Trotskyism and the fate of the SWP, this may appear as a positive development. Finally, a more profound balance sheet of the entire tenure of the Barnes leadership from the oppositionists. But, upon closer examination, this criticism of Barnes reduces itself to an abstract and superficial criticism of "method," and the FIT continues its defense of the program and policy of the SWP during the Barnes leadership up to 1979.

We have seen, since the oppositionists were expelled, a steady change in the explanations by the FIT of when the abandonment of Trotskyism took place. FIT explained previously that it began in 1979. Then there were criticisms of the industrialization of the mid 1970's.

We have also seen a change in why Barnes attacked Trotskyism. The reason given before was his "impatience" with the slow growth of the Fourth International.

Now, we are told, the reason for the SWP's abandonment of Trotskyism is that Barnes "never really conquered the Marxist methodology."

On the level of facts and dates, this balance sheet is an implicit rejection of the position of one of the well-known older cadre expelled from the SWP, George Breitman, and probably many of the other older cadre. The eulogy to Breitman in *Socialist Action*, newspaper of *Socialist Action*, another group of expelled oppositionists, stated how he "bitterly fought against all those who claimed that the seeds of the party's degeneration were to be found . . . in the SWP's program or practice prior to 1979." (The Barnes leadership has been in place for over 25 years.)

But, when all is said and done, these changes obscure rather than clarify the balance sheet of the roots of the SWP's anti-Trotskyism.

The 'Criticism' of Barnes

The FIT criticizes Barnes' "method" completely abstracted from what the method is used for -- developing a political policy. "The Barnes current has proven itself to be totally incapable

of applying a Marxist method . . . The political approach of the SWP's present leaders is characterized by empiricism, eclecticism, and a pragmatic schematism." But not a single word relating this method to the program of the SWP.

The root of Barnes' methodological problems is, we are told, the objective conditions of the struggle against the Vietnam War. "But the uniqueness of this situation was not recognized at the time -- where one aspect of the class struggle was so completely dominant on the US . . . scene. A kind of one-sided approach to political life began to be seen as the norm within the party."

In a more confused way, this is yet another apology for Barnes. First the slow growth of the Fourth International was the "objective condition" that justified Barnes' "impatience." Because he was impatient he abandoned Trotskyism. (See Truth #211, "No to Reunification with Anti-Trotskyists - A Reply to the FIT," for further discussion of this line.)

Now that that analysis has proven insufficient, we are told that, due to the "objective conditions" under which the leadership grew up, it -- unfortunately -- "never really conquered the Marxist methodology." Poor Barnes.

But, on a more profound level, on the level of program, the "more things change, the more they remain the same."

The FIT continues to defend the program of the SWP under the Barnes leadership and thus avoid a discussion of the fundamental question that the oppositionists must come to grips with -- what is the root of the SWP's anti-Trotskyism on the level of program? Not on the level of individual desires or of individual shortcomings, or even of "objective conditions," but of the actual propaganda, political activity and line that it defended in the American working class and internationally.

In this article, specifically, the FIT continues to defend the fundamental Pabloite and anti-Trotskyist policy of substituting other leaderships (Castroists, the Sandinistas), for the indispensable task of constructing Trotskyist parties. This policy is the core of the SWP's program since 1963 that finally came to full bloom in 1979 when Barnes announced his anti-Trotskyism.

The question of the construction of Trotskyist parties as the principal task of the sections of the Fourth International was rejected by SWP when it left the International Committee and

reunified with the Pabloites in 1963 forming the United Secretariat.

It was the SWP that issued the original Open Letter organizing the International Committee in 1953 against Pablo and Mandel around this question. Then, Pablo and Mandel wanted to dissolve the Fourth International into the Stalinist parties as a substitute for building Trotskyist parties. This was a complete abandonment of what the Fourth International was founded for and would have resulted in the disappearance of the Fourth International.

The SWP reunified in 1963 with the same leadership -- Mandel without Pablo -- defending essentially the same policy in a new situation. This time the form it took was finding in Castro a substitute for Trotskyism. And, not surprisingly, this has led, objectively, to a capitulation to Stalinism.

For the Fourth International, the Cuban regime began as a radical petty bourgeois leadership at the head of an anti-imperialist, democratic revolution. Under the pressure of the masses who wanted a break with US imperialism and a deepening of the revolution, and under the influence of the Soviet Union and Stalinism, Cuba was transformed into a deformed workers state, and Castroism became an integral part of the international apparatus of Stalinism. It is necessary to rebuild the Cuban section of the Fourth International to overthrow the Castroist bureaucracy through a political revolution, just as in the USSR, China and Poland.

The "New International"

The logical conclusion of rejecting the construction of Trotskyist parties is the need to construct a "new International" from these "new non-Trotskyist" elements. So Barnes proposed in 1981 a "new International."

The FIT comments on the "new international": "The Barnes leadership is no closer to realizing that fantasy now than it was when it initially charted the perspective."

In an effort to breathe some life into his moribund policy, Barnes asserts that there is the possibility today for a "communist regroupment" in the Americas based on the formation of the new "Anti-imperialist Organization" composed of the Castroites, Sandinistas, national-bourgeois governments, etc.

The FIT criticizes Barnes' attitude toward the Anti-Imperialist Organization. He makes too much of the possibilities, it says, since "its unity is extremely tentative, hardly something

to which we can attribute big new opportunities." And, "the current orientation toward the Anti-Imperialist Organization continues and deepens that error (of confusing the different kinds of 'anti-imperialism'.)"

It goes on to discuss how "anti-imperialism" could be "embraced by a liberal-bourgeois government (none are mentioned -- Truth) in the semi-colonial world . . . allowing more room for native exploiters . . ."

The FIT continues by attempting to draw a balance sheet of the past activity towards Castro -- specifically, the SWP and the entire United Secretariat's support to the Organization of Latin America States (OLAS), founded by the Cuban regime in 1967.

The FIT states that the OLAS accomplished "little" and "was subsequently dissolved at the initiative of Havana." It says that the OLAS "was based loosely on opposition to US imperialism and support for the Cuban revolution."

The OLAS, ostensibly formed to spread revolution throughout Latin America, in fact misled the revolutionary upsurges against US imperialism. It opposed the political line of the "peaceful road to socialism" of the Kremlin, but substituted for it an equally destructive line of "guerilla warfare," that is it substituted for Stalinism a radical petty-bourgeois line. And, it was consciously anti-Leninist and anti-Trotskyist.

The OLAS' founding documents, and one of the books that issued from this period in Cuba (and supported by the Castro leadership), "The Revolution in the Revolution" by Regis Debray, attacked the necessity of a proletarian revolution in Latin America, stating that it would be the peasants that would make the revolution. They attacked the need for constructing proletarian parties and instead, supported building "guerrilla bands" in the hills. In an effort to show how it is done, Che Guevara was sent to Bolivia. He was murdered by Bolivian police within a year.

The failure of this attempt, along with the rising revolutionary tide, forced Castro to drop even this facade of internationalism. In 1968, the OLAS was dissolved; Castro supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the USSR and said virtually nothing in defense of the French and Mexican student uprisings (in order not to alienate the French Communist Party and the Mexican bourgeois government). The OLAS was the last peep out of Castro that even appeared to challenge the Kremlin.

Thus, in this brief description, we can see how the Castro current transformed from a petty bourgeois radical current to what it is today -- a Stalinist leadership.

But this current is a "proletarian revolutionary" one for the FIT and for Barnes. Capitulation to it was the basis for the reunification in 1963, or more precisely, the abandonment of the International Committee established in 1953 as the organized continuity of the Fourth International, and remains the anti-Trotskyist underpinning of unity between the FIT and the present SWP leadership.

The Trotskyist Congress

The FIT's solution to the degeneration of the SWP is: "a rededication to a revolutionary Marxist program and method, a return to the road of the Fourth International"

In Truth #211, we discussed the FIT article, "Prospects for Reunification of the Fourth Internationalist Movement in the United States." In this article the FIT stated that the main condition for uniting the dispersed forces of the Fourth International in the US was readmission of the expelled oppositionists back into the SWP.

The formula of "rededication" is more vague (more disarming to the unaware) but it has the same content -- let the oppositionists back in because Barnes is wrong, in other words, reform the SWP. But, the past policy and program of the SWP is what has created the rotten leadership. It is this that must be changed; in the struggle for clarifying this question a new leadership will be formed.

That is why the reform of the SWP -- whether it is in the form of "readmission" or the more vague "return to road of the Fourth International" -- is not a solution.

Given the turn in the class struggle in the US, the response of the vanguard becomes an element of the discussion. This solution has garnered little support from the working class, youth or the SWP militants over the past year. We can safely predict that these forces will never respond favorably to such a bankrupt perspective.

On the contrary, a powerful struggle is rebuild the US section of the Fourth International, a struggle that has developed outside of the SWP, precisely because of the depth of its betrayal of Trotskyism, is necessary.

The US section has to be rebuilt for one reason only: the SWP's abandonment of Trotskyism. That is why the political content of the struggle to rebuild the section is a clarification of Trotskyist principles in opposition to the SWP as well as the roots of the SWP's anti-Trotskyism.

We propose a struggle for a Trotskyist Congress to rebuild the US section in order to

unite all healthy Trotskyist forces inside and outside the SWP.

A struggle for a Trotskyist Congress to rebuild the US section of the Fourth International can create the conditions for a great step forward, for a "return to the road of the Fourth International," by the working class vanguard. This is the road that we should march down together. This is the proposal that the FIT should respond to.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE:

French:

La Quatrième Internationale

La Verité (Organ of the Revolutionary Workers League of France)

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(Below we publish the article "Where is the Socialist Workers Party Going?", by Steve Bloom, about which our comrade Fred Michaels writes in this issue.)

WHERE IS THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY GOING?

by Steve Bloom

The March issue of the *International Socialist Review* (supplement to the March 20 *Militant* newspaper) carries three articles dealing with the current state of the Socialist Workers Party. The first is by Doug Jenness and covers a report made by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes to the party National Committee on February 20, 1987; the second deals with a Pittsburgh gathering of party activists from coal-mining regions which took place February 21-22; and the third is a report on recent advances by the Young Socialist Alliance. Taken together these three items paint a revealing portrait of the state of the SWP today, and of the perspectives which are currently being developed by the party leadership. Four main themes can be noted:

- The SWP has been on the decline for more than a decade. This decline has taken the form of a decrease in membership, a shrinkage in sales of the party press, and a breakdown in day-to-day functioning and activity. This decline of the party is attributed by the SWP leadership to objective factors—the general retreat in the American class struggle during this same time frame (the take-back offensive by the ruling class, passivity of the unions, etc.).

- There has now been a basic shift in the objective circumstances laying the basis for an end to the party's decline. The party has stopped becoming smaller (though it isn't growing, recruitment has simply begun to replace losses) and the YSA has gone through a dramatic growth spurt. This, too, is a result of an objective change, the beginning of the end of the retreat by the U.S. working class.

- There are two central features to this change in objective conditions: 1) the experience of the P-9 strike and a generally increased resistance within the working class to continued concessions; and 2) the development of a higher level of "anti-imperialist unity" on an international scale, represented by the formation of the Anti-Imperialist Organization of the Caribbean and Central America.

- The development of this "anti-imperialist unity" creates the potential for a major breakthrough for "communist regroupment" in the U.S.A., as well as internationally.

The last point is of particular significance for Fourth Internationalists in the United States who belong to the organizations created by those

expelled from the SWP during the party leadership's 1982-84 purge of the organization (the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Socialist Action, and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity) as well as for the Fourth International itself. In this article we will examine the four themes developed by Barnes in his report concerning the current situation in the U.S. class struggle, take up the problem of the anti-Marxist methodology employed by the present leaders of the SWP, and conclude with some remarks about the proper way to try to overcome the present crisis of the Socialist Workers Party.

Decline of the SWP

There can be no dispute, of course, that the political fortunes of the SWP have been on the eclipse for a number of years. In every measure—membership, mass influence, circulation of the press, etc.—the party has been seriously undermined.

But it is untrue, as Jack Barnes asserts, that this decline can be solely, or even primarily, attributed to unfavorable objective conditions. Such an answer is too simplistic (particularly with regard to the most recent period). It is not designed to be a serious analysis, but to absolve the present party leadership—which has been the leadership during this entire time—of its share of responsibility for the present condition of the organization.

What Barnes says about the objective conditions of the U.S. class struggle over the last five to ten years is true so far as it goes. This has been a time of retreat and disorganization for the working class. It has been marked by concessions, plant closings (in particular union plants), union-busting bankruptcies and mergers, etc. Most of those who tried to resist the concessions drive have been defeated—though there were a few notable exceptions. The result is a drastic decline in union membership in this country, which is now at its lowest percentage since the victory of the CIO organizing drives in the 1930s.

But there are a number of mediating factors which Barnes leaves out of his account. In the first place, despite the retreat of the organized workers' movement there has been a modest increase, during this same period, of radical sentiment among more conscious working-class elements. This is illustrated, for example, by the dramatic growth of interest in publications such as *Labor Notes* and the steady increase in attendance at the conferences held periodically by that newsletter.

It is probably safe to say that most radical currents which made an effort to involve themselves in a serious way in trade union struggles over the last five years have found that their influence has grown, and that they have been able to recruit a few people out of the unions. This has not been true of the SWP.

The *dramatic* decline of the party—more than half its membership in a ten-year span—might be explained by objective conditions if we had experienced a period of *extreme* conservatization and *drastic* defeat. But that is not what has occurred. The ruling class succeeded in making gains, but there have been few decisive battles or crushing blows to the proletariat. And even a victory for the capitalists such as occurred in Austin, Minnesota, with the setback of the P-9 strike, may end up as a double-edged sword—since it has stimulated the militancy (and may well spur the organization) of a certain layer of workers in the packinghouse industry.

The last few years have also experienced a deepening of the majority sentiment against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, as well as a steady growth of the movement in solidarity with the revolutionary struggles in that part of the world. Even at a time when most of the independent organizations of allies of the working class—women, Blacks, other oppressed nationalities, youth—were not very active, the Central America question held out significant opportunities for the revolutionary vanguard in the U.S. to increase its influence and prestige. Unfortunately, the sectarian approach of the SWP during much of this time led instead to its increased isolation on this question. (See "The Socialist Workers Party and the Struggle Against Imperialist War in the 1980s," by Tom Barrett, *Bulletin IDOM*, No. 37.)

As a final test of the validity of Barnes's explanation for the decline of the SWP we might take a look at what actually happened to those who were once members of the SWP but are no longer. Of course, a genuine scientific survey is impossible, but if Barnes's assertion is correct the overwhelming majority should simply have succumbed to demoralization and would now be politically inactive.

Yet any ex-party member who is familiar with the anti-intervention movement in this country today, who attended the last "Labor Notes" conference, or who knows the individuals involved in a myriad of local activities sponsored by various mass organizations around the country, can tell us that hundreds of those who were recruited to the SWP during the 1960s and early 70s and who left the party for a variety of reasons during the past decade remain politically active. Many who took industrial jobs as part of the turn have kept them, and became active militants in their unions *after* they dropped out of the SWP.

These cadre were lost to the party, but not to radical, even revolutionary, political work. On top of this we must add those who were expelled

during the anti-Trotskyist purge and who remain organized and active. These individuals, the party leadership explained at the time, "were retreating in the face of the imperialist war drive; succumbing to bourgeois pressures." Yet many of them have emerged as central leaders in the fight against U.S. intervention in Central America, as well as in trade union and other struggles.

All of this should give pause to anyone who would blithely accept Jack Barnes's convenient and schematic approach to history. It should stimulate present members of the party to ask themselves: "Have we done any things wrong which contributed to our own decline? Are there perhaps some lessons to be drawn for our organization which have not yet been drawn? Is there anything left out of the analysis our present leaders have given us?"

Basic Change?

We can have similar reservations about Barnes's assertion that 1986 marked a fundamental change in the objective conditions facing the revolutionary movement in this country. It is certainly true that there have been some modest shifts. The number of strikes increased last year. Workers have begun to understand that concessions do not lead to better times in the future, but only to demands for more concessions and greater attacks on their standard of living and their unions.

Nevertheless, the U.S. working class is still quite far from any kind of effective organization, even on a local or trade union level. The closest thing to an experience which taught a different strategic lesson was the struggle of P-9 in Austin, Minnesota. That, however, fell short of victory, which severely limits its use as an example for others. Despite all the publicity for P-9, the kind of fight it carried out hasn't yet been generalized—not even within the meatpacking industry.

We must remain cautious, therefore, in concluding that there has been any kind of dramatic shift in the retreat of the working class and its allies. Nothing has yet happened which, in and of itself, would lay the basis for a big new advance by the revolutionary party in the U.S.A.—though that might change at any time.

United Mine Workers

Among the perspectives outlined by Barnes in his report, and emphasized in the companion article from the Pittsburgh active workers conference, is a recommitment to work in the coal industry and the United Mine Workers union. Barnes asserts that the UMW is qualitatively different from the rest of the U.S. labor movement. According to the Jenness article, he "noted that the United Mine Workers (UMWA) is the only industrial union that has not been deeply set back by the employers' offensive. It has not been saddled with the same kind of big takeback contracts."

The reason for this, the SWP leadership explains, was the victory 15 years ago of the Miners

for Democracy movement. This created structures in the union for control by the rank and file which remain in place today. They strengthen the UMWA against attacks by the ruling class. "The fight for takebacks hasn't been posed in the same way in coal as in other industries yet. And when the employers decide to pose it, they'll have a different kind of fight on their hands than what faced them in auto and steel."

This same theme was repeated in the article on the active workers conference. Yet here, in reporting on comments by conference participants, the article itself poses some of the problems which the Barnes analysis chooses to leave aside: "Several speakers described how the coal bosses have stepped up their attacks on miners since 1984. Safety and working conditions have been seriously undermined.

"Tens of thousands of miners have been laid off. For example, there are 23,000 miners working in West Virginia today compared to 68,000 in 1978.

"About 40 percent of the coal mined in the country is done by UMWA members compared to 80 percent 10 years ago."

None of this has provoked a serious challenge from the union. It remains to be seen whether the UMWA will prove itself able to fight back in the future. It is not even guaranteed that the matter will be posed in the same way as it has been for other unions. So far, as we can see from the *Miltianu's* own figures, the ruling class has been pretty successful in undermining union conditions in coal without a head-on confrontation.

Anti-Imperialist Organization

On the international scene Barnes asserts that new opportunities are opening up for discussions among "communists" of various stripes, and even for "communist regroupment." The key occurrence here has been the formation of the Anti-Imperialist Organization of the Caribbean and Central America which, according to the Jenness article, "has united a broad range of groups."

That is true. This organization has within it a wide variety of perspectives and ideologies. They range from proletarian revolutionary (various components of the Castroist current) to petty-bourgeois radical, and even bourgeois liberal. This all-inclusiveness is, for Barnes, a very positive sign. In another context he tells about his participation in the 25th anniversary celebration of the founding of the FSLN in Managua last November: "I was especially impressed with the fact that all communists and liberation groups who support the Nicaraguan revolution were treated as equals."

But the SWP leadership ought to ask itself whether "support to the Nicaraguan revolution" or "anti-imperialism" is a sufficient basis for "communist unity." We have had a few experiences with this, from which the appropriate lessons ought to be drawn. In the 1960s the Castro leadership in Cuba attempted to organize the Organization of

Latin American Solidarity (OLAS), based loosely on opposition to U.S. imperialism and support for the Cuban revolution. Little was accomplished by OLAS, and it was subsequently dissolved at the initiative of Havana.

More recently, beginning in the late 1970s, the Cuban leadership was also the spearhead in a formation known as the Movement of Non-Aligned Nations. Its only cohesive political element was opposition to imperialism. But the fact that this formation was composed primarily of neo-colonial governments meant that it could not exercise any genuine independence from imperialism.

The Anti-Imperialist Organization is, of course, different from both OLAS and the Non-Aligned Movement. Its scope is more limited geographically; it is composed of both ruling government parties from a number of Caribbean and Central American countries, as well as non-governmental parties, radical currents, etc. But the fundamental political glue which is holding it together is nothing more than what existed with OLAS and the Non-Aligned Movement. Its unity is extremely tentative, hardly something to which we can attribute big new opportunities.

"Anti-imperialism" has a wide variation of meaning for individuals and groups with different political outlooks and different interests to defend. For revolutionary Marxists it means the overthrow of bourgeois rule and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But the same words, "anti-imperialism," can be embraced by a liberal-bourgeois government in the semicolonial world and will simply mean allowing more room for native exploiters in the context of their domestic economy and the international market.

It is the most serious sort of error for a proletarian revolutionary to confuse these different kinds of "anti-imperialism," to muddle them together, to fail to make the necessary distinctions between them. Yet that is precisely the kind of "analysis" that the SWP leadership has consistently practiced. The current orientation toward the Anti-Imperialist Organization continues and deepens that error.

It is one thing for the Sandinistas, who must maneuver diplomatically in a very complex political environment, to treat all "who support the Nicaraguan revolution as equals" at their anniversary celebration. It is quite another for the leader of a revolutionary Marxist party in the United States, a party fraternally affiliated to the Fourth International, to do the same thing.

All those who "support" the Nicaraguan revolution (even those Barnes seems to include in his statement about "communists and liberation groups") are *not* equals in the programmatic sense, and that is what is key here. They range from Social Democrats and Stalinists to revolutionary Marxists. They include bourgeois liberals, petty-bourgeois radicals, and proletarian fighters. The distinctions between these elements are essential to the understanding of working people all across the globe who still have the task before them of

ridding the world of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. There was a time when even the present leaders of the SWP would have taken pains to make the necessary distinctions. The fact that they now contribute to the confusion says a great deal about the real reasons for the decline of the organization which they lead.

"Communist Regroupment" and the New International?

The fact is that SWP leaders are incapable of making the necessary distinctions here. If they did, the futility of the course they have been charting for the SWP since 1979 would be clearly revealed. That political course has been based on the perspective of helping to bring about a "New International"—an international revolutionary formation based on the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and (until its overthrow) Grenadan revolutions.

The Barnes leadership is no closer to realizing that fantasy now than it was when it initially charted the perspective. but the creation of a group like the Anti-Imperialist Organization can create the illusion that some important step has been taken—at least for members of the party who have lost the habit of thinking critically. This illusion within the SWP is essential for the party's leadership, since the real reasons for the drastic decline of the organization have more to do with their mistaken political perspectives than with the "objective conditions" that Barnes cites in his plenum report, and he must above all hide that fact.

The party has been drifting politically for almost a decade, without a practical perspective which might enable it to grow. Its eyes have been focused on the Caribbean and Central America at the expense of the U.S. class struggle. That's one reason why it has missed the opportunities which did exist here, modest though they have been.

At the same time, the leadership of the SWP has been able to show no tangible results from its perspective of international regroupment. The long-range result can only be the demoralization of those who remained loyal to the Barnes faction through all of its twists and turns, its abandonment of the Trotskyist program, and the bureaucratic purge of the opposition. They need to see results which can justify their actions, yet actual results of the orientation have been pretty slim. Something has to be done. So Jack Barnes issues another promissory note for the New International, this time in the form of the Anti-Imperialist Organization, and attempts to explain the past away on the basis of "objective conditions."

Since it is impossible to do all of this while being honest about the facts, about what the Anti-Imperialist Organization really represents, about what the objective conditions have been, Barnes must ignore the facts. He can only hope that when reality comes crashing down around his head he will have some new ray of hope which he

will then be able to hold out to those who will still listen to him.

At the same time Barnes has raised the stakes, as we have noted, because in this plenum report—for the first time as far as this writer is aware—he projects revolutionary "regroupment" not only on an international scale, but for the United States as well. And it is presented as an immediate practical task.

Central to these new possibilities, according to Barnes, is the "historic crisis shaking the Soviet Union." Jenness reports: "This also opens up opportunities for political discussions among communists in different organizations in the United States." Barnes is quoted concerning the upcoming collection of Lenin's writings to be published by Pathfinder Press: "This can be the basis for a broad discussion among all those who consider themselves communists. It can contribute to breaking down old lines."

A number of questions should spring to mind for any serious revolutionary politician: Who are to be the SWP's partners in this "communist regroupment"? What sign do we have that there is any motion among these elements in the direction of revolutionary Marxist ideas which would justify such a regroupment perspective? What is to be the programmatic basis of this regroupment?

Barnes does not define who he means by "all those who consider themselves communists" (though we can definitely rule out ex-party members who remain loyal to the Fourth International, since the SWP continues to exclude all individuals who belong to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Socialist Action, and Solidarity from even entering its public bookstores or attending public events which the party sponsors). But if we take the hint he gives about the impact of the current Gorbachev reforms in the USSR, he can only be referring to the U.S. Communist Party and/or those in its milieu.

We know of no objective developments among these forces (or among any others in the U.S. radical movement today for that matter) which would support a regroupment perspective, and Barnes doesn't cite any. We can assume that if the opportunity existed to justify his new-found openings for "communist regroupment" on any other than the most abstract plane he would certainly have taken advantage of it.

The only "breaking down of old lines" which is a realistic possibility under present circumstances, therefore, consists of a further abandonment of those revolutionary Marxist positions still held by the SWP, more discoveries of "sectarian holdovers" from its Trotskyist past, a further jettisoning of those things which continue to divide the party from others "who consider themselves communists" in the United States. Unless it can be shown that some other forces are coming closer to revolutionary Marxist positions, the only way for the Barnes leadership to pursue regroupment is for them to get closer to the positions of non-revolutionary elements.

Of course, it is not guaranteed that the party leadership will actually pursue this new line. Simple practical problems, a cold shoulder from "others who consider themselves communists" may preclude it. But the very fact that it has been posed by Barnes raises serious new dangers to which all Fourth Internationalists in this country and around the world must be alert.

Problems of Method

The real key to changing the future fortunes of the SWP is rather different from the path outlined by Barnes in his plenum report. Reversing the programmatic changes, returning to a Trotskyist political perspective, is essential if the SWP is to move ahead in the future. Unless a current develops within the party ranks, or in its secondary leadership, which begins to take a real, hard, honest look at the errors of the last decade—*errors which hinge around the conscious abandonment of the Trotskyist program beginning in 1979*—there is no way the party can ultimately reverse its decline. This doesn't mean that the process will be a simple, linear one, that the SWP will continue to shrink without interruption. The fundamental question is not even reducible to one of the size or influence of the party. It is really a matter of the SWP's ability to become an effective revolutionary leadership for the U.S. working class.

There cannot be any *revolutionary* organization without serious attention being paid to the development of revolutionary program and theory. The Barnes current has proven itself to be totally incapable of applying a Marxist method, which is essential to theoretical development.

The political approach of the SWP's present leaders is characterized by empiricism, eclecticism, and a pragmatic schematism. The rich, multi-faceted reality of political events (i.e., its genuine dialectic) become reduced in their thought to a series of "yes or no" propositions. No serious analysis of events is presented, but rather a series of assertions to be accepted as true, without any effort to demonstrate their validity. There is also no consistent approach to theory. Ideas are grabbed from here or there as they are useful to make a particular point, without regard for their true import and significance in an overall theoretical construct. All of this serves whatever schema may currently be deemed efficacious for building the party.

This general methodology can be clearly recognized by anyone who reads Jenness's account of the current Barnes report. For those who may have previous experience in the party and with this leadership, the roots of these difficulties, the application of this method of political analysis will be appreciated as a problem with a long history.

The political grouping around Barnes got its first experience in revolutionary politics during the 1960s. The period in which they began to emerge as the leadership of the SWP coincided with

the development of the Vietnam war, and the movement against it in the United States. During that time members of the SWP liked to say that Vietnam was "the center of world politics." There was a very large degree of truth to this at the time, and it was primarily around the antiwar movement that the party was built during those years.

But the uniqueness of this situation was not recognized at the time—where one aspect of the class struggle was so completely dominant on the U.S. and, to a somewhat lesser extent, world political scene. A kind of one-sided approach to political life began to be seen as the norm within the party.

With the end of the Vietnam war, the SWP leadership tended to look for some other political phenomenon which would serve the same broad function as the antiwar movement, which could become a similar vehicle for building the party. The list of things which were tried, and which failed to produce the hoped-for results, is long. It includes the abortion-rights struggle in the early 1970s; school desegregation (around the time of the racists attacks against school bussing in Boston); the turn to small "community branches" of the party (as a result of a wild extrapolation of an individual experience with the struggle for community control of the schools in the Lower East Side of New York); the turn to basic industry; sponsoring trips to Grenada and Nicaragua; the National Black Independent Political Party; even, for a time, a projected "alliance with working farmers."

In the context of the turn to industry, party cadre were shifted from one plant to another in an effort to find *the key* situation where the SWP might meet revolutionary-minded workers and make major gains. Steel, auto, garment, coal (to which they have now returned in the present perspective along with meatpacking) were among the unions emphasized for a time, only to give way in a few months to a new "target industry." All ultimately proved a disappointment, because the expectations projected by party leaders were not in line with a serious analysis of the state of the U.S. class struggle. In general, a more profound analysis of the objective situation, a more multi-faceted approach to political activity, was needed. But the Barnes leadership had never really conquered the Marxist methodology which would have allowed it to make that analysis.

Of course, it must be stressed that all of these various twists and turns of the post-Vietnam period—up until the turn away from Trotskyism in 1979—were accompanied by a serious effort to project the current campaign to the membership, fit it into an overall programmatic context (to the extent that this was understood), and win the organization to it through a basically democratic process. But the 1979 "Cuba turn," followed by the turn to the "New International" in 1981, were at one and the same time, something qualitatively new, as well as extensions of this previous method.

They were an extension of the old because, once again an effort was being made to find *the*

central focus of international politics toward which the party could orient, a single aspect which could be abstracted from a much more complex international reality—something easily understood, easy to rally the party organization to—and which would win the SWP some influence and authority. In a real sense, the turn to Fidel Castro was a direct outgrowth of the party's frustration from having applied this schematic methodology for so long without success. The Barnes leadership extended its approach on a grand scale.

At the same time, however, the pro-Castroist turn represented the point at which a quantitative escalation of the old methodology reached a qualitative stage. For the first time, in order to project a campaign of this scope, the SWP leadership had to begin to fundamentally alter the programmatic traditions of the party. It also moved to impose its perspectives bureaucratically, keeping its overall goals secret from the membership, prohibiting discussion, and expelling anyone who dared to raise a critical voice.

These facts, above all else, illustrate the basic empirical and pragmatic methodology of the Barnes faction. The historic program of the party, its Trotskyism, was an obstacle to making some quick immediate gains which appeared to be possible through a link up with the Sandinistas, with Castro, and with the Grenadan revolution. Barnes decided, as all pragmatists do, that program was subordinate and secondary to immediate practical necessity, and the program was jettisoned without even a nod in the direction of a discussion in the SWP as a whole and without a serious effort to disprove the theories he was discarding.

How to Overcome the Crisis in the Party

From the *Militant's* report on the active workers conference, as well as from some objective factors which can be measured by those outside the SWP, it is quite clear that the party's organization is, to a significant degree, in a state of disarray. Plant-gate *Militant* sales, which had for a long time been the touchstone of the SWP's "proletarian orientation" have suffered a "significant erosion," according to Mac Warren who gave the main report to the conference on the decisions of the National Committee. Not enough attention is being paid to work in the industrial unions. Things must be tightened up. Even the casual observer of the SWP can see, for example, that its election campaigns in many cities over the last few years have been very much pro-forma events, with no vitality and little activity of any kind.

It is obvious that the new turn projected by the plenum is an attempt to rally the troops, to give the party a shot in the arm, and it may work for a period of time. Yet none of the perspectives presented in the plenum report can resolve the fundamental difficulties which confront the Socialist Workers Party today, since they do not go to the root of the programmatic problem.

Back in 1983, the two opposition currents which then existed within the National Committee of the SWP—the Fourth Internationalist Caucus and the Trotskyist Tendency, both since expelled—presented a joint document entitled, "A Platform to Overcome the Crisis in the Party" (published in *Bulletin IDOM*, No. 3, February 1984). The majority current in the NC, of course, rejected that platform, and even went so far as to ridicule the idea that there was a crisis in the organization. The crisis, they declared, was in the perspectives of the opposition. When the mass purge of the Trotskyist wing of the SWP took place in early 1984, the party leadership told the ranks that now, since the "disrupters" (some more colorful terms were also used) had been eliminated, the party would finally be able to move forward and to grow.

But the party continued to stagnate. In fact, things got worse. Today, with this plenum report by Barnes, even he must acknowledge, even if only tacitly, that the crisis pointed to by the opposition in 1983 was real, and had been affecting the organization for some time.

There are no gimmicks, no panaceas, no magic formulas which will overcome that crisis; nothing which can hide the present party leadership's responsibility for what has happened to the organization; no short cuts to the goal of forging a revolutionary Marxist vanguard in the United States—through regroupment with forces in the Stalinist milieu, or even for the present with the Castroist current.

What is necessary, as the documents of the opposition pointed out in 1983 and even before, is a rededication to a revolutionary Marxist program and method, a return to the road of the Fourth International. The only other course is for the SWP to face the prospect of becoming one more in a long series of footnotes to history—parties which exercised influence, which played a revolutionary role for a period of time, but which ultimately degenerated beyond recognition, becoming at best irrelevant in the struggle to liberate humanity from capitalist oppression, and at worst another obstacle in the path of that struggle. ■

March 31, 1987