

**Information, Education, Discussion** **Bulletin**  
**In Defense of Marxism**

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

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

—V.I. Lenin, "The Party Crisis," Jan. 19, 1921 [quoted in Trotsky's *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926-27), p. 247; for another translation see Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32, pp. 43-44].

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The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, founded by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because we opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than a half century.

Denied the right, specified in the SWP constitution and by Leninist norms, of a full and free discussion of all programmatic changes, we were subjected first to gag rules and slander and finally to wholesale expulsions. The present leadership has resorted to these bureaucratic methods in order to impose their revisionist political line upon the party without discussion or approval by the membership.

We are now forced to organize and conduct this discussion outside the SWP. Our aim is to encourage discussion and debate within the party by those seeking to defend revolutionary Marxism and to bring about our reinstatement in the party.

We firmly believe that the present leaders of the SWP cannot avoid that discussion through organizational measures and expulsions. The relevant issues will increasingly appear on the agenda as their new course comes into conflict with the reality of the class struggle in the U.S. and around the world.

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## FIRST F.I.T. NATIONAL CONFERENCE (Oct. 6-8, 1984)

### DELEGATES PLEDGE CONTINUED FIGHT TO REFORM SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

by Steve Bloom

The first delegated national conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 6-8. The delegates vowed to continue the F.I.T.'s fight to overturn the bureaucratic purge of the Socialist Workers Party--carried out by the party leadership since the end of 1982--and to defend the 55-year continuity of Trotskyism in the United States which the SWP embodies.

Resolutions and/or reports were adopted at the conference under four major agenda items. In this issue of the Bulletin IDOM we are publishing in full the edited text of the Tasks and Perspectives resolution adopted by the delegates, along with the document that outlines our current organizational tasks. We are also printing excerpts from the resolution on the orientation of the F.I.T. toward the World Congress of the Fourth International (now scheduled for early 1985) and from the anti-war/anti-intervention report. These were also approved by the delegates.

The most fundamental point that the conference had to decide was whether the F.I.T. should continue as an independent organization in its original form. This was not a foregone conclusion. When the F.I.T. was organized last February, we adopted a short-term orientation--until the 1984 SWP convention, held in August. That perspective, which was outlined in the "Platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency" adopted last March, focused on organizing a programmatic and theoretical struggle in defense of the historic revolutionary Marxist program of the Fourth International against the revisionist and liquidationist challenge of the Barnes leadership of the party.

The purpose of the October F.I.T. conference was to assess the current situation. We had to ask ourselves the questions: Did the results of the SWP convention qualitatively change the reality we faced? Did it mark the decisive transformation of the party? Was there any reason for us to change our orientation toward the SWP and toward the need for a programmatic and ideological struggle?

The conference decided that there has been no qualitative change. The SWP remains a revolutionary party, and our task remains to reform that party, not to build a new one. The reasons for that assessment are outlined in our Tasks and Perspectives resolution, titled, "Where We Stand After the 1984 SWP Convention." This is the major priority for the F.I.T., and all our other tasks flow from our basic assessment of and orientation toward the SWP today.

The conference also drew a balance sheet of what the F.I.T. has accomplished since our formation. We have regularly published the Bulletin IDOM as our main contribution to the discussion in the SWP and the Fourth International. We have succeeded in keeping it relevant and current, and in improving its appearance and circulation. We have produced a series of other books and pamphlets in defense of our program. We have grown by a net figure of 20 percent since our formation as a tendency. Our Local Organizing Committees have remained active in the class struggle; and as a national organization we played a key role in building the Cleveland anti-intervention conference last September and in making it a success.

In addition, the Tasks and Perspec-

tives resolution discusses our relationship to other groups and tendencies, specifically the other tendencies that have emerged from the current struggle in the SWP -- Socialist Action and the North Star Network (led by Pedro Camejo).

\* \* \*

The resolution and report on the coming World Congress were designed to accomplish two distinct, though interrelated things: First, we needed to clearly affirm our commitment to being part of and building the Fourth International. We support the general line of documents now proposed by the majority of the United Secretariat for the World Congress. Our short resolution, excerpts of which are published here, took up each of these documents and briefly discussed the basis of our agreement with them.

Our second task was to affirm our own role as a specific tendency within the International. We have consistently advocated a more vigorous struggle by the international majority to combat the revisionism of the Barnes faction. Our resolution explains the political necessity for the formation of an international membership grouping--a tendency or faction--to carry out this fight. In addition we maintain a different view on a number of political questions. The most immediate concerns the correct usage and meaning of the term "workers' and farmers' government" along with the related problem of how to analyze the post-World War II social transformations in Eastern Europe and China. (See our "Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government" and "The Workers' and Farmers' Government and the Socialist Revolution" in Bulletin IDOM No. 6.)

\* \* \*

The discussion at the conference on organizational tasks decided that we will essentially continue to function as we have until now--as an ideological tendency which must take on a certain number of additional organizational responsibilities because we have been bureaucratically expelled from the SWP. That there will be no significant changes in our organizational structure reflects the fact that our political tasks remain fundamentally the same as they have been since our formation. The resolution on this reaffirms our commitment to democratic centralism.

\* \* \*

The point on the antiwar/anti-intervention movement was handled a little differently from other main agen-

da items. We had no resolution, only a report, and most of the discussion on it took place during an evening workshop session--during which the discussion was open to all conference participants, not just delegates. There was also a brief period for further discussion of the report open to delegates only. Our goal in the solidarity work is simply to build the movement itself, and bring about the greatest possible pressure on the U.S. government to keep its hands off Central America and the Caribbean. The workshop session in particular demonstrated that even with our small forces, the F.I.T. has been effectively involved in this activity in many parts of the country.

\* \* \*

In addition to the main agenda points, the conference heard an appeal by Gerardo Nebbia--who asked it to overturn his expulsion from the F.I.T. by the New York Local Organizing Committee. (See material on this case in Bulletin IDOM Nos. 4, 8, and 12.) Nebbia's appeal was rejected and his expulsion upheld by the conference delegates.

The delegates and guests in Minnesota had an average of 17 years experience in the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance. Some had been party members for forty or even fifty years. Their ages ranged from the 20s to early 70s. More than half are present or retired union members; more than a third are currently active in antiwar or Central America solidarity groups, and approximately 25 percent belong to feminist organizations.

In addition to the regular conference sessions and the antiwar/anti-intervention workshop, there was also a social on the first evening, which heard tapes of talks by Trotsky, James P. Cannon, and Malcolm X.

This conference was an important and successful event for the F.I.T. We were not, of course, without our disagreements on certain questions; but there was no doubt at all about the basic line and perspective adopted by the delegates. It is safe to say that we emerged from our conference more united and better equipped to conduct our fight for reinstatement, and to join with others in the Fourth International who reject the Barnes faction's effort to abandon Trotskyism.

October 20, 1984

## WHERE WE STAND AFTER THE 1984 SWP CONVENTION

Tasks and Perspectives Resolution adopted by F.I.T. National Conference

October 6, 1984

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency was founded in February 1984 by expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party. Our purpose was to pursue the programmatic and ideological struggle against the Barnes faction's revisions of our Marxist heritage. Under normal conditions of a Leninist organization, we would have been able to do this within the party, but the bureaucratic methods used by the central leaders of the Barnes faction suppressed discussion, and then split the party by expelling those who voiced serious political differences. Although forced out of the SWP, we remained committed to building a mass revolutionary party in the United States and we viewed our political struggle against the Barnes faction as the center of this party-building strategy.

We immediately appealed our expulsions and took the necessary steps to carry out the essential tasks of defending a Marxist program, Leninist organizational norms, and the Fourth International. We adopted the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism as our public voice, established Local Organizing Committees, set up a national structure for communication and consultation, and ratified a platform which appeared in the April No. 5 issue of the Bulletin IDOM (and was then published as a separate pamphlet).

We reaffirm our original purpose and the "Platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency" which presents our analysis, orientation, and basic programmatic positions.

We are forced to continue functioning as a separate national organization because our appeals for reinstatement were rejected by the SWP National Committee and by the National Convention which was held in August. We now need to draw a balance sheet of the period since our founding in February and present our tasks and perspectives through the holding of the World Congress of the Fourth International (now scheduled for early in 1985).

Basing ourselves on a continued homogeneity of our tendency's political analysis concerning national and inter-

national events, this resolution addresses itself to four specific questions: 1) What have the developments in the SWP revealed to us about the party? 2) What have we been able to accomplish as an organized tendency in the eight months since our founding? 3) How should we now orient to the SWP? 4) How should we relate to other political groups and tendencies?

### THE PRESENT STATE OF THE SWP

We can evaluate the situation in the party by two developments which have taken place since our founding: the SWP National Convention and the September 14-16 Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean.

The 1984 SWP convention was the first real opportunity we had to test the reaction of the party membership to the programmatic and theoretical revisionism of the Barnes leadership. Previous to this, all questions of party orientation have been posed to the ranks--to the extent they were posed at all--only in terms of the "organization question" (the demand that comrades in some branches approve the expulsion of individual oppositionists), or in an extremely distorted form through local discussions. We noted in our "Platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency" that the actions of the leadership could not be considered decisive for determining the stage reached in the political degeneration of the party, that the last word on this would rest with the rank and file.

What did the preconvention discussion tell us? Did it provide a definitive answer concerning the future course of the SWP and the character of its members? Our conclusion is: it did not.

We hoped for (though we didn't necessarily expect) a major challenge to the new programmatic positions of the Barnes faction, or at least some significant protest about the organizational measures which were taken to prevent a discussion. This did not occur. The SWP leadership worked for, and got, a plebiscite in favor of its new program. Not a

single opposition delegate was elected and the convention unanimously approved all of the reports.

This was an overwhelming formal victory for the leadership and marked an important stage in the evolution of the party. It would be wrong, however, to conclude on this basis alone that the future of the SWP is definitively or inevitably resolved. The surface appearance masks--at least to some extent--the actual process now going on inside the party. The situation is complex and a number of dynamics are operating on both leadership and membership alike.

The membership was not truly involved in a full and democratic discussion because the revisions of program and theory were only posed indirectly through the guise of a vote on Barnes's 1982 report, "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States." The membership is faced daily with the reality of on-going mass movement activities and opportunities while the leadership uses rhetoric to cover up its continued abstentionist policies--even in the area of trade union work which has been given the highest priority since the "turn to industry" was proclaimed in 1978.

The party ranks were officially proscribed from any contact with oppositionists in the United States and were denied full access to the views of the majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International--so a real choice, based on full information, was not possible during the preconvention discussion period. Restrictions on democratic rights of party members made the emergence of a new organized opposition inside the SWP extremely difficult.

During the discussion period itself, the Barnes leadership did everything it could to get a completely monolithic response in favor of its new line. In this it did not succeed. The preconvention discussion revealed that a certain layer of the party--though no doubt a narrow one--still consciously maintains its adherence to a Trotskyist theoretical analysis. Another layer raised questions about specific problems, such as the turn to industry, youth work, the "inevitability" of war in Central America, the nature of the period, organizational matters, etc. This showed that a number of members continue to think for themselves about problems facing the SWP, even though they do not necessarily have a thought-through critique or understand all of the reasons for things.

It is noteworthy that the early

part of the preconvention discussion was primarily taken up by articles implicitly or explicitly critical of the leadership and its policies--and this despite the attempts to limit the discussion and intimidate anyone who would express a dissident idea. Our experience has been that members who begin to think about or question even minor aspects of policy are capable of rapidly developing a broader understanding. Questioning may begin with small problems, but these are really symptoms of the underlying disorientation which has created the larger programmatic revisions.

We do not want to overstate the level of dissent within the party. It is not great. And much of what does exist is expressed cautiously; it is hesitant, uncertain, or ambivalent. It is clear, however, that despite the central leadership's overwhelming formal victory at the national convention, cracks exist in the edifice they have been straining to construct.

These cracks can widen with time, the impact of events in the class struggle, further internal discussion, and the accumulating experience with the objective results of the leadership's self-destructive political course. No one is more aware of this than the leaders of the Barnes faction itself--which is why they continue to tighten the restrictions on internal democracy and continue to fear a genuine debate with those they have expelled, even though they have struck a democratic pose by promising to schedule extensive internal discussion and two conventions in the next year.

A clear sign of the leadership's confusion and paralysis was its failure to produce a political resolution for discussion until the very end of the preconvention period. They then proposed continuing internal discussion on their own political resolution even after it was adopted at the national convention!

The "tightening-up" process in the party was capped at the convention by a purge of the National Committee. Such developments have an impact on SWP members (and those in the party milieu who learn about them), reinforcing doubts in those who already have them, and perhaps raising questions for some who have simply accepted the line of the leadership up to now.

The long-delayed Political Resolution sought a ratification of all the changes in party program and norms imposed by the leadership over the past

## I N O U R N E X T I S S U E

- \* This past August the SWP leadership excluded representatives of the Fourth International from attending the party's national convention in Oberlin, Ohio.
- \* In October the SWP leadership announced that there would be another SWP national convention in January 1985 to adopt positions and elect delegates to the World Congress of the Fourth International which is scheduled to be held early in 1985. This discussion has now been opened and is taking place in the SWP.
- \* OUR NEXT ISSUE (December, No. 14) will feature articles on the SWP's new discussion and the coming World Congress. It will also contain an article on the November U.S. election results, an Open Letter to Fred Halstead, and other articles.

three years. In some respects it was a combined international and U.S. resolution (the kind adopted by the 1981 national convention) since it takes up in great detail developments in Central America and the Caribbean. But as a resolution dealing with the international scene it is wholly inadequate since it discusses no other aspect of the world revolution (such as important events in Iran or the process of political revolution in Poland). This one-sidedness regarding the world situation reflects the Barnes faction's line that the center of world politics exists solely in the events taking place in Central America and the Caribbean.

On the domestic front, the resolution offers no perspectives or strategy for waging a real fight for trade union democracy, class independence, labor solidarity, the struggles of Blacks and Latinos and other oppressed minorities, of women and other victims of the ruling class offensive against the poor and oppressed in U.S. society. (At the same time, lip service was given to traditional SWP programmatic positions, strategies, and principles on such questions. This reflects the fact that the present party leadership--despite all of its organizational manipulations and formal victories in winning votes--has not yet totally erased the memories of SWP members nor completely converted the ranks to a wholesale junking of the heritage and revolutionary perspectives which attracted them to the SWP in the first place.) The political resolution codified in written form the abstention-

ist course followed by the leadership of the Barnes faction: a continued default in the elementary responsibility of a revolutionary party to try to provide leadership for the struggles of working people and their allies.

Contradictions within the party could be seen particularly clearly in relation to the Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean which was held September 14-16 in Cleveland. The official public stance of the SWP was to virtually ignore the conference before it took place, and then to publish a distorted and dishonest report of it in the October 12 issue of The Militant. Within the party, the leadership openly attacked the conference and held back those members (there were many) who wanted to help build and support it. Many former party members and some active supporters were greatly enthused by the conference; they helped to build it, participated in it, and are now working to implement the action program approved at the plenary sessions. The SWP leadership continues to be hostile to the process set in motion by the conference--but branch members who are involved in solidarity groups or anti-intervention activities are hearing first-hand reports from people who attended the conference and must deal with the concrete actions being organized and projected as a result of it. Some will be affected by this on-going development.

It is obvious that the fundamental revolutionary fiber of the SWP has been

dangerously frayed but has not yet been torn to shreds. We maintain our characterization of the SWP as the revolutionary party in the United States. Our task is to reform the party--get it back on the proper path. We recognize that the SWP is in a process of evolution and that it cannot remain in a transitional stage for an indefinite period. A decisive development that marks a qualitative turning point one way or another is inevitable, and probably not too far distant.

### WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED?

Despite the continuous efforts of the SWP leadership to build barriers between our tendency and the party membership, we have been able to reach SWP members as well as active supporters, party sympathizers, and former party members. When the mass purge first took place in January 1984, the membership was told that "the splitters" were simply to be ignored because the party had better things to do than to discuss with us. But that did not work. The Barnes faction has had to devote considerable time and energy to answering our challenge--though not, of course, by political debate, as a Leninist leadership would do. They prefer organizational frame-ups, slanders, and exclusion. In a distorted way, these efforts of the party leadership prove our primary contention: punitive organizational measures can never resolve the political problems created by a revisionist course.

The Bulletin In Defense of Marxism has expanded its circulation both inside and outside the party, and we have made significant strides in terms of its becoming an attractive and relevant journal. We have succeeded in publishing, and making available at modest cost, a series of "Documents from the Struggle in the SWP and the FI," other pamphlets, and the book Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua by Paul Le Blanc. We have had some success with sales of International Viewpoint--including to members of the SWP.

Although it has remained limited, our personal contact with party members has increased since the creation of our tendency. In addition, we have established relations with active supporters, sympathizers, ex-party members, and others in the party's milieu. We have succeeded in growing modestly as a result of some recruitment from this layer around the SWP and from former members.

The public events we have organized

or co-sponsored have aided in the process of establishing ourselves as a serious political current. A few examples will indicate what we have been able to do: a successful weekend of talks was held in Philadelphia, Labor Action Forums and the Carl Skoglund Centenary Celebration took place in Minneapolis, an Open House with a discussion of working class radicalization was held in Los Angeles, and a series of classes in New York has attracted a number of people over the past four months.

Our members have been active in trade unions, feminist organizations, and anti-intervention groups. The Twin Cities organizing committee played an important role in building support for the Iowa Pork strike; a Seattle F.I.T. member has been playing a leadership role in the local CLUW chapter (Coalition of Labor Union Women); tendency members have been involved in the Philadelphia Trade Union Committee for Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador. The Cleveland organizing committee helped initiate, and follow up on, a break-through national political development: the Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean. Our tendency helped build that conference around the country. Members of the F.I.T. attended the conference, served on the Acting Steering Committee, and were elected to the Continuations Committee. F.I.T. organizing committees are now involved in helping to implement the action program adopted by the conference. Despite our small size, we have been playing an important role in this key political development.

As a result of our involvement in such mass movement activities we have begun to recruit a few members who have never been in the ranks of the SWP or any other political party. In many cases, our activities in unions, the feminist movement, and solidarity groups has been our only, or best, avenue of making contact with SWP members--who have been ordered to keep us out of SWP election campaign rallies, forums, bookstores, and party headquarters. The SWP leadership cannot give such orders to mass movement groups, however.

Since forming the F.I.T., we have acted in the best internationalist traditions of U.S. Trotskyism. We have made sure that the documents and publications of the Fourth International have gotten into the hands of supporters of the world movement. We were instrumental in



collaborating with the Swedish section in celebrating Skoglund's centenary. Although our resources are limited, we have helped when possible to gain support for international defense cases.

We regard ourselves and are regarded by the United Secretariat as members of the Fourth International (to the extent that this is compatible with U.S. law). Our appeals for reinstatement in the party have been sent to both the SWP and the Fourth International. We are appealing to the World Congress to: "1) urge the U.S. Socialist Workers Party to reverse its decision and reinstate the political expellees, so a genuine and democratic discussion of the differences can take place in the party and so that the unity of the Fourth International can be maintained; 2) pending such action, or in the absence of such action by the SWP, recognize that those who have been victims of the political purge in the party remain members of the FI (to the extent this is compatible with U.S. law); and 3) take necessary organizational steps to maintain appropriate collaboration between those who have been expelled and the leadership bodies of the International."

#### **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

Our tasks and perspectives are determined first of all by our understanding that the SWP remains the revolutionary party in the U.S. and that the programmatic differences have not yet been resolved--either through discussion or in practice. The goal of the Barnes leadership has been to consummate an organizational solution prematurely through bureaucratic means and to avoid the political discussion at all costs. Our goal is the opposite: to do all we can to force the Barnes faction into the political discussion both here in the United States and internationally at the World Congress of the Fourth International.

We can now pursue that goal more vigorously than before. All of our activities over the past eight months--establishing a functioning organization, publishing literature, sending out mailings, making personal contacts, holding public events and internal educational activities, being involved in social struggles and mass movement groups, recruiting to our tendency, supporting and relating to the Fourth International--have given us the basic materials and experiences in working together which now allow us to move ahead more effectively.

We shall continue our orientation to the SWP and to the ideological struggle in defense of Trotskyism. This orientation is not a narrow one limited to party members alone. "Orienting to the SWP" is a shorthand way of saying we are orienting toward: members currently in the SWP, active supporters and sympathizers, former party members, people around and in contact with the SWP (such as the Young Socialist Alliance). Our orientation is also not narrow in terms of the ways we carry it out. We will utilize many approaches--and encourage our members and supporters to be creative and to take local initiatives in their efforts.

The Bulletin In Defense of Marxism, as our national public journal, remains our most valuable tool in clarifying political questions, correcting the distortions and lies about party history and principles, analyzing current developments in the U.S. and the world, answering the slanders against expelled and dissident members, and presenting discussion articles on a wide range of issues. We will also continue our project of publishing books and pamphlets. We will continue to utilize publications of the Fourth International and to sell International Viewpoint. We will participate in the SWP's pre-World Congress discussion through these publications--and if the promised discussion on the Political Resolution takes place, we will participate in that too.

Personal contact with party members will probably come about most often through our working together in solidarity groups, unions, and feminist organizations as well as through common participation in public events such as anti-intervention demonstrations. Personal contact with active supporters and others in the party's milieu will occur in the same places but, in addition, we can attract some to classes, open house discussions, forums, and special events. Informal private discussion should continue as another avenue of reaching people.

Depending on local situations, F.I.T. organizing committees will respond to opportunities in the labor, feminist, and anti-intervention movements. A high priority will be given to carrying out the action program approved at the Emergency National Conference in Cleveland.

We reaffirm our continued commitment to the industrial turn as originally projected by the SWP in 1978, and as adopted at the 1979 World Congress of

the Fourth International. One of the tasks of the F.I.T., to the extent it is possible given our size and strength, is to motivate our members to seek jobs in the industrial working class. This will both further our own political education and contribute to the advancement of the consciousness of the working class as a whole. In making this affirmation, we continue to reject the caricatured notions of the turn, and the bureaucratic methods used in carrying it out, developed by the Barnes leadership over the last five to six years.

An integral part of our broad orientation to the SWP is our support to and relations with the Fourth International. We are participating in the pre-World Congress discussion in various ways: local classes and discussions on resolutions for the Congress, publication of documents and articles addressing questions on the agenda of the Congress, and circulation of the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism to sections and individuals in other countries. In these activities, we are confronting the Barnes leadership not only here in the U.S., but are reaching out internationally to confront the faction they have been organizing in sections of the Fourth International.

We recognize that an important part of our international responsibility is to offer an alternative political analysis and class struggle strategy to the one presented by the Barnes faction in the international discussion and in domestic practice. We are keeping open the F.I.T. Internal Discussion Bulletin as part of the process of studying in depth and developing in detail our analysis of the state of the U.S. ruling class, the actual condition of American capitalism today, the inter-connections between U.S. imperialism and countries around the world, the capitalist offensive against workers and their allies in the U.S. and abroad, the default of the American labor leaders to mount an effective fight-back, conditions in the U.S. working class, the role of Social Democracy and Stalinism, and the political tasks of the Fourth International. We need to analyze more concretely how and why the Barnes faction developed, how it was able to gain control of the SWP, and how it has influenced others within the world Trotskyist movement.

Our orientation, and all the tasks that flow from it, will be carried out most effectively only if we ourselves are educated about our heritage, program, history, political theories and

principles, and organizational norms--as well as about current developments in the United States and around the world. Organized educational activities and personal studies are necessary to equip us with the knowledge, understanding, and political arguments needed to counter the years of miseducation carried out by the Barnes faction; to make up for the lack of education carried out by the SWP in recent years; and to allow us to participate intelligently in the current international discussions and debate. Our Handbook for Marxist Studies calls attention to the importance of an educated membership and will aid in organizing a wide variety of educational activities. The crucial issues raised in the World Congress resolutions and articles are a further spur to serious discussions and classes.

All of our political work will be affected by bringing in and educating new members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Our modest growth up until now has shown that we can recruit former party members, SWP active supporters, and previously unaffiliated persons to our tendency. There is a significant layer of people who resigned from or informally dropped out of the SWP over the last decade. Their interest in political discussion and activity has been revived in many cases--by events in the world and by what they are beginning to hear about what has happened in the party. More than many others, these comrades will understand the principled political issues involved in our dispute with the Barnes faction, and the importance of our orientation toward preserving the revolutionary integrity of the SWP. Through our involvement in mass movements and struggles we will continue to meet new people, and we will recruit them--to revolutionary socialism in general, and to the perspectives of the F.I.T. in particular.

#### OUR RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GROUPS

All of our tasks, including our relations with other groups, flow from our orientation to the SWP and to the fight for programmatic clarity. We did not organize ourselves as a separate current to immediately pursue a regroupment policy with other organizations. We are seeking reinstatement in the SWP and we remain committed to the reunification of all Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. within a common party. Today that party can only be the SWP. What is needed is a principled political discus-

sion in the SWP leading to the World Congress.

In a Leninist party, distinct tendencies or factions with widely divergent views can exist--each presenting its own perspectives within the organization for discussion and decision by the membership. This norm of Leninism has been blocked up until now by the actions of the Barnes faction which has rejected all appeals of expulsions and continues to expel oppositionists. The result has been the separate organizational existence of four distinct public tendencies: the party itself (though the Barnes faction denies its own existence as a tendency), the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, the North Star Network, and Socialist Action. Groups that exist as specific political tendencies or factions of a party, whether public or not, require considerably more political homogeneity than the political party itself.

The North Star Network is closely related ideologically to the Barnes faction in that NSN rejects Trotskyism and permanent revolution. NSN criticizes SWP leaders because they have not gone far enough and fast enough in discarding the SWP's Trotskyist heritage. In addition, NSN criticizes the Barnes faction because it has not acted audaciously within the American class struggle--a general criticism we can agree with in the abstract while noting that North Star's concrete actions have not presented a positive alternative. A specific example is NSN's hostility to the Emergency National Conference held in Cleveland. Members of NSN composed the major opposition to endorsing the conference within the Philadelphia Trade Union Committee for Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador. The Camejo current took a sectarian stance toward the anti-intervention conference (even going so far as red-baiting the event because of our involvement). It gave primary consideration to its own maneuverings within CISPES instead of to building a movement which can actually mobilize the U.S. population in solidarity with the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean.

NSN specifically rejects building a revolutionary party right now in the U.S. Issue number 3 of the North Star Newsletter published the objectives of this current, including the following: "The North Star Network is not a vanguard. It has no such pretensions. It is not a pre-party formation or a pre-pre-party formation. It is only a forum to

facilitate a dialogue toward resolving the problems holding back the formation of a more united and effective revolutionary movement."

When Socialist Action was founded in October 1983, it formally adopted traditional Trotskyist and Leninist programmatic and organizational principles.

Although Socialist Action calls itself a public faction of the SWP, it failed, for example, to relate seriously to the party's preconvention discussion and to the national convention itself--an elementary task for a group which calls itself a public faction of the party. A comparison between the activities of SA and the F.I.T. reveals the depth of our differences in orientation. We used our resources to participate in the SWP preconvention discussion (for example, through articles in the Bulletin IDOM and through organizing discussions and classes around the country). SA used its resources to pursue a very different orientation. It established a large national headquarters. It published a monthly newspaper oriented to the general radical and working class public, along the lines of and in competition with The Militant. It organized local branches to carry out the political work of a typical SWP branch (regular forums, fractions, etc.).

F.I.T. members went to the site of the SWP national convention prepared to appear in person to appeal the expulsions (which was not allowed by the SWP leadership) and also to make contact with those attending the convention (through placing our literature in a nearby bookstore, posting leaflets in store windows, and displaying signs inviting party members and supporters to contact us to arrange discussions). F.I.T. was able to meet and talk with people, sell our literature, and make our presence felt in an effective way without resorting to any provocative behavior which could be seized upon by the SWP leadership.

From the beginning the crucial difference separating SA from F.I.T. has been this one of orientation--a key question, since it defines the different goals and functions of political groups. SA failed to understand the need to fight to preserve our traditions through the organizational form of the SWP itself. The activities carried out by SA since its founding, in contrast to those of the F.I.T., have proven that these differences continue to separate us and have led to a growing divergence.

As the old saying goes: "Actions

speak louder than words." Regardless of official statements to the contrary, SA has, in general, acted in a way that demonstrates its conception of itself--as a replacement for the SWP. This approach is only compatible with an evaluation that the SWP is no longer the revolutionary party in the United States.

We have collaborated with SA as fellow Fourth Internationalists on some specific events (such as the tour of Rosario Ibarra de Piedra and the Carl Skoglund Centenary Celebration). We shall continue to do so where joint projects fit into our priorities. Our most recent experience in trying to work with SA has centered on the Emergency National Conference. In the activities to build the conference, at the conference itself, and then in implementing the conference's action program, we have found that significant differences over priorities, strategy, and tactics exist. Under present circumstances, therefore, joint fractions are not appropriate.

As always, we stand willing to join with any other group in a common united front defense of working class interests. Any future development which may lead to closer working relations between

currents, or to a possible regroupment, is far more likely to result from political agreement as demonstrated in common political activity, than from abstract affirmations of historical or theoretical principles.

### CONCLUSION

Our present orientation as outlined in this resolution must be considered transient and temporary. The situation inside the SWP is a fluid one which we must watch closely and evaluate frequently. It is therefore necessary for us to reconsider our perspectives at intervals which will be shorter than those a revolutionary party, for example, would ordinarily require in the pursuit of its practical work. Our first national conference takes place eight months after the preliminary meeting which organized our tendency nationally. We will need to evaluate the developments from this point through the holding of the World Congress, now scheduled for early in 1985. A second national conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency will then be required to draw up a balance sheet and project our orientation, perspectives, and tasks.

## THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, THE WORLD CONGRESS, AND THE F.I.T.

Resolution adopted by F.I.T. National Conference (excerpts)

October 7, 1984

The name we chose when we founded our tendency captures our commitment to the program of the Fourth International --the only international worthy of the name currently existing--and our dedication to the construction of a revolutionary vanguard in the United States which will be a component part of that world party. Our current was forged in the struggle for a Fourth Internationalist program inside of the SWP. After we were expelled we organized ourselves to continue that struggle. Now, at our first national conference, we reaffirm this perspective.

Today both the program and organization of the FI are challenged by an international faction created by the Barnes leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. The programmatic struggle which we have undertaken here in the United States is essential for all FI sections and sympathizing organizations.

It is one in which the entire membership of the international must be mobilized to defeat a revisionist threat which rivals that of the petty-bourgeois opposition in 1939-40.

### FOR AN ORGANIZED INTERNATIONAL STRUGGLE

We believe that this fight should be carried out in a serious and disciplined fashion. The majority leadership of the United Secretariat should call upon and organize the rank and file of the FI to wage a battle for the defense of our fundamental ideas. This will not only aid us in neutralizing the liquidationist challenge of the Barnes faction and in answering their allegations about the "disarray" of the Fourth International, but will also heighten the consciousness of the ranks and help to educate our entire world party on the issues in dispute. The organization of

an international tendency or faction to defend our Trotskyist traditions must be undertaken as soon as possible.

\* \* \*

[Editorial note--There follow several paragraphs which outline the basis of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency's support to the resolutions put forward for the World Congress by the United Secretariat majority. These cover the present situation in the Fourth International, general political developments in the world today, Poland, Central America, and the need for democratic functioning--in the working class movement in the fight to overthrow capitalism and in the workers' states after its overthrow. We omit this section of the resolution because most of these documents have been published only in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin and are not available to all Bulletin IDOM readers.]

\* \* \*

### WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT

The question of the workers' and farmers' government has been put on the agenda as a major dispute because of the attempt by the Barnes faction to use it as a wedge in undermining the theory of permanent revolution. That is the political content of Barnes's 1982 report, "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States." We categorically reject this effort, as does the majority of the FI. Our differences with Barnes are of a basic programmatic nature.

Even among those who agree on the need to defend permanent revolution there remain differing interpretations of the correct usage and meaning of "workers' and farmers' government." But

these differences are not programmatic. We all agree on the class nature of the revolutionary regime we advocate to carry out the transition from capitalism to socialism: It must be a workers' government in alliance with the poor peasantry and other oppressed layers--the kind of government that Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and the Fourth International have traditionally referred to as the dictatorship of the proletariat. We all reject the idea of some necessary intermediate stage, akin to the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." It is these questions which are fundamental.

Within this context, the F.I.T. completely opposes any suggestion that Joseph Hansen's analysis of the workers' and farmers' government, developed in the 1960s, is somehow at the root of the subsequent theoretical degeneration of the SWP. We affirm our support to the general line of this approach as explained in the "Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government," (see Bulletin IDOM No. 6) submitted in November 1982 by the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the SWP National Committee.

The working out of differences of a substantive nature concerning the class character of specific transitional regimes, and of terminological disagreements between different Fourth Internationalist traditions regarding the meaning of "workers' and farmers' government," are important, even if they remain of a general historical and theoretical nature. We believe a literary discussion should be organized after the World Congress with the goal of forging greater homogeneity on this question within our world movement.

## OUR PRESENT ORGANIZATIONAL TASKS

Resolution adopted by F.I.T. National Conference

October 7, 1984

Our tendency is a unique innovation of Bolshevik organization. We began--and continue--to function as an ideological tendency to combat the revisionism of the Barnes faction in the Socialist Workers Party and in the Fourth International. Defense of the theory and program of revolutionary Marxism--the current known as Trotskyism--remains for us our highest priority. But our expulsion

from the SWP imposes tasks on the F.I.T. far different than those of an ideological tendency within the party. We are not only deprived of participating in the official internal discussion in the SWP; we are cut off from all day-to-day party assignments. This poses quite a challenge to us. While asserting the primacy of a sound theory and program as indispensable to effective action, revo-

lutionary Marxists deny any sharp dichotomy between "theory" and "action." Our theory and program must be constantly tested, enriched, and corrected on the basis of application in living struggles. If we allowed our separation from the SWP to isolate us from these struggles we would ossify.

While recognizing that we are not a party, do not now aspire to be a party, and therefore cannot accept all of the tasks of a party, we nevertheless must organize ourselves to intervene in the class struggle movements to build these movements, carry out basic socialist propaganda, and recruit workers and activists to a revolutionary socialist perspective.

We remain committed to Leninist forms of organization which are incredibly rich and versatile. Bolsheviks have developed methods to organize the work of tiny groups functioning illegally, mass parties openly vying for power, and many intermediate organizational forms. Leninist currents have been able to function inside reformist and Stalinist parties. From the great wealth of Bolshevik organizational practices--above all the experience of American Trotskyism under Cannon's leadership--we will find the compass to guide us.

The exact organizational measures presented in this resolution are applicable to the particular period now facing the F.I.T. and are not intended as long-term ones. The general principles that guide us, however, are long-standing.

## DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

As a Leninist current fending for ourselves outside the Socialist Workers Party we operate under the principle of democratic centralism. Genuine Leninists have always recognized that the emphasis on either the democratic or the centralist component of this dialectical formula varies widely according to the situation.

Most of our tasks today do not require combat centralism. As a political tendency fighting for a principled reunification of American Fourth Internationalists, we are relatively homogeneous. We have adopted a program for the most important questions, both internationally and in the United States. Differences among us are mainly over tactical or secondary matters. On these kinds of issues we can afford, and will benefit by, encouraging discussion and not being hasty to make binding decisions.

When our organization does decide a question, that decision will be binding on all members.

We recognize that our involvement in mass movements requires centralized action. We will organize fractions where appropriate and designate floor leaders to make on-the-spot decisions where necessary when questions arise that the fraction has not discussed. We reject the SWP leadership's "new norm" that only floor leaders may speak while other members of a fraction take notes and raise their hands at the designated time.

## STRUCTURE OF THE F.I.T.

### I. Local Organizing Committees

The basic unit of the F.I.T. is the Local Organizing Committee. LOCs shall have regular meetings with structured agendas. Minutes shall be taken at all meetings and copies forwarded to the national center. Each LOC shall elect a coordinator or organizer who will be responsible for preparing agendas for meetings, seeing that decisions are implemented, and serving as the communication link between the LOC and the national center. If it is necessary or appropriate, LOCs may elect other officers (such as a treasurer) or leadership bodies (an executive committee) to share these and other responsibilities.

### II. National Organizing Committee

The national conference shall elect a National Organizing Committee of eleven members. The NOC will be charged with ensuring the implementation of conference decisions and will be empowered to determine major national policies between conferences. The NOC will elect the National Coordinators who will be responsible to the NOC. The NOC will organize our next national conference as soon as practical after the coming World Congress of the Fourth International. The NOC may coopt additional members should it feel a political requirement to do so.

### III. National Coordinators

The NOC shall elect three National Coordinators, one of whom will be available to reside in New York and work full-time maintaining the national center. The coordinators will confer regularly to review the work of national departments and national campaigns; approve expenditures of national funds; make recommendations to the NOC and take up any other appropriate business. The

coordinators will be responsible for informing and consulting with NOC members and LOCs on national matters in a timely manner.

#### IV. National Departments

In the coming period we will have at least two functioning national departments--publications and education. These departments will be responsible to the NOC through the National Coordinators. The Publications Department will be responsible for the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism and other F.I.T. publishing projects. The Education Department will maintain the Handbook for Marxist Studies, facilitate circulation of tapes and other materials, and work with LOCs on developing local educational work.

### **FINANCES**

An ideological tendency inside the Socialist Workers Party does not require much of a treasury. Its members put nearly all of their available financial resources into the party. But our expulsion drastically altered our financial situation.

We are cut off from the impressive apparatus that we worked and sacrificed so much to build up--now in the hands of the revisionist SWP leadership. We started with nothing. We have no angels. If we are to carry out our tasks we must reestablish the same kind of membership financial commitment that we had while in the SWP.

As of October 1984, every member of the F.I.T. shall pay dues of \$2.00 per month. LOCs shall retain \$1.00 of this payment and send \$1.00 to the national center. In addition, every member should have a regular pledge to their LOC or to the national center. It is essential that every comrade pledge financial support according to their ability to pay.

LOCs must ensure that a sufficient part of their income be sent to support our very modest national center. We can expect that many of our sympathizers will be willing to make regular contributions if we organize approaching them in a serious way.

### **NORMS OF MEMBERSHIP**

We can expect a very wide range of activity levels among our members. We have members who are physically unable to participate in much activity but will continue to be of great value for their

ideas, experience, and moral support. The demands of work, family obligations, and our relatively high average age will mean that we can't make projections as if we were back in the YSA. We must be ruthlessly realistic about deciding what tasks we take on, for whatever we do we want to do it right. That's part of the Cannonist continuity we fight to maintain.

But this does not mean that we have no norms of membership. Belonging to the F.I.T. does not require less commitment than party membership. Quite the contrary. F.I.T. members must be prepared to stand up not only to the "normal" pressures weighing upon revolutionists from bourgeois society, reformists, Stalinists, etc., but also to the additional burden of defending ourselves against the slander and ostracism of the misleaders of the revolutionary party.

In addition to regular attendance at LOC meetings and financial support, all F.I.T. members must be available for assignment under the direction of the F.I.T. All members must share in the responsibility for circulation of the Bulletin IDOM, International Viewpoint, and our other literature. Members involved in mass activity will function as disciplined comrades in political collaboration with the organization as a whole. We reject the concept of freelancing in any political work.

This kind of commitment separates members from sympathizers. We highly value our sympathizers and, unlike the cynical SWP approach to organizing "active supporters," we want to genuinely involve them in our work to the extent they are willing and able.

A number of F.I.T. members continue to maintain social relations with members of other left groups--particularly Socialist Action. Mature Marxists learn to separate political relations from personal ones. The F.I.T. takes a hands-off position in regard to the social lives of its members.

Political collaboration with members of other organizations is another matter. We continue the Leninist norm that political collaboration with any non-members be under the direction of the F.I.T.

We also recognize that some "personal" aspects of comrades lives could threaten the security or political reputation of the F.I.T. We reaffirm that any activity which poses such a danger, such as the use of illegal drugs, is incompatible with membership in our organization.

## ENRICHING OUR LENINIST PRACTICES

This resolution is not a rule-book or a cook-book. It is simply a codification of some generalizations we have made in our brief history as a current cut off from our party. In addition to this resolution we will be guided by the

Statutes of the Fourth International; the Constitution of the Socialist Workers Party (as approved at the 1981 convention); the SWP organizational resolutions of 1938, '40, '53, and '65; the norms of the Cannon era in the SWP; and the good judgement of our comrades.

## THE STATE OF THE ANTI-INTERVENTION MOVEMENT

Report adopted by the F.I.T. National Conference (excerpts)

October 8, 1984

by Jean Tussey

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency has just come through an experience with the Emergency National Conference in Cleveland that some comrades have characterized as "just what the doctor ordered."

Several years of abstention from participation in the antiwar movement, imposed by the crisis of leadership in the Socialist Workers Party, was beginning to take its toll.

Revolutionary Marxists, despite the organizational restraints of the Barnes administration, continued to hone their theoretical tools for building the party. The Fourth Internationalist Caucus, a minority of two, Bloom and Lovell, in the National Committee, produced resolutions that did provide class struggle guides for action in the mass movements. One was "The Tasks of the SWP in the American Antiwar Movement," submitted to the December 1982 NC plenum. Another was "Socialist Strategy for Class Struggle Transformation of the Unions," for the August 1983 National Committee meeting. But such alternatives to the incorrect theories and practices of the Barnes faction were suppressed and banned and, as you are well aware, all the supporters of the ideas of the caucus were excommunicated. This left us like other skilled workers in capitalist society--with good tools, but unemployed. Lack of use can result in rusty tools and skills.

The Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean provided the first major opportunity for us to test once again our ability to combine theory and practice in the mass

movement, and to make a significant contribution. In that sense, it was "just what the doctor ordered."

It was good medicine not only for us. It was good for the whole labor and socialist movement in this country.

It opened the public discussion of the strategy, tactics, and organizational structure needed for an independent, united front mass movement to stop U.S. military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

It adopted a transitional program for uniting the anti-intervention movement to mobilize opposition to the U.S. government's foreign policy.

It educated on the history and nature of U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, and its relation to intervention in other areas of the world.

It provided an object lesson in democratic organization and conduct of a national conference.

It began a reversal of the paralyzing cynicism, demoralization, and loss of self confidence in the left and among activists in the labor and social movements.

In her Tasks and Perspectives report yesterday, Evelyn Sell discussed what the Cleveland conference revealed to us about the Socialist Workers Party as it functions and plans to function in the anti-intervention movement. She described in modest terms the key role our numerically small tendency was able to play; how our activity in implementing the action proposal adopted by the conference relates to our continuing orientation to the SWP in the process of rebuilding the revolutionary socialist



vanguard party of the Fourth International.

She also described how other political tendencies, such as Socialist Action and North Star Network related to the conference and to us and vice versa.

Since many of you were at the Cleveland conference, practically all of us participated in building it, and most of you are familiar with the statistical information in Coordinator Jerry Gordon's report letters, I won't dwell on that. But these facts are important in view of the distorted report in the latest Militant:

The conference was sponsored or endorsed by 285 organizations and individuals, including two international unions, 13 locals, 36 union presidents, and 8 regional/district directors or presidents. Unions representing 200,000 workers endorsed the conference. Other sponsors and endorsers included 32 local solidarity/anti-intervention groups, 11 of which are CISPES chapters or affiliates.

Six hundred fifty people registered for the conference, including 175 trade unionists from 42 unions, 116 members of solidarity organizations, 88 representatives of peace groups, 21 students and faculty, 17 persons from the religious community, and participants from the women's rights, senior citizens, sanctuary, and other social movements.

The program of action adopted by the conference calls for rallies, demonstrations, and meetings during October 20-28, 1984, coinciding with the first anniversary of the U.S. invasion and conquest of Grenada; picket lines at Federal Buildings between noon and 1 P.M. on November 10, 1984; and organization of massive demonstrations in April 1985. An amendment to the action proposal calls attention to the U.S. government's employing the military and economic resources of client states to achieve its foreign policy objectives when U.S. intervention is blocked by U.S. domestic opposition, and urges informational materials and speakers to expose this proxy intervention.

The conference elected a continuations committee whose functions are:

- 1) To assist in every way possible in establishing a broad and representative working committee that would be the decision making body in planning the spring demonstration.

- 2) To publicize the decisions of the Emergency National Conference.

- 3) To seek the broadest and most united sponsorship of the entire anti-

intervention movement to organize and convene a second national conference to be held soon after the spring action. Such a conference would assess the situation at that point and plan further actions.

The conference also called for establishing anti-interventionist coalitions around the country, where these do not already exist, to unite the movement on a local level in order to build the spring and fall actions.

The Emergency National Conference voted to have a delegation from its Continuations Committee attend a September 25 meeting in Washington, D.C. called by representatives of national peace groups to discuss a spring peace demonstration. Our aim was to seek their support for the conference's action proposal. We were authorized to make whatever changes were necessary in the conference's proposal to have a united demonstration in the spring and a unified structure to organize and coordinate that demonstration.

They voted to hold a mass antiwar/anti-interventionist demonstration April 13 or 14 in Washington, D.C. but further details, including structure, are to be decided at another meeting October 23.

[The October 23rd meeting selected Saturday, April 13, 1985, for the mass demonstration in Washington, D.C.]

On structure, the Emergency National Conference delegation urged that a working committee be established to plan the April demonstration with representation open to every national organization and every grass-roots local coalition wishing to participate. Such a committee would be open-ended, broad, representative, and non-exclusionary, with all decisions democratically made. Of course a smaller coordinating committee could be elected by the larger group.

Local antiwar activists and trade unionists already have numerous coalition-building events under way, of which we should hear reports at the workshop tonight. One of the remarkable things about this whole development has been the tremendous amount of initiative that has taken place in grass-roots organizations and coalitions throughout the country.

Several positive developments in the past week can now be reported:

- 1) A letter was received from the Nicaraguan embassy asking for reports and documents of the conference.

- 2) The momentum of labor support for anti-intervention positions noted throughout the building of the Emergency

National Conference continues to grow. Resolutions against intervention in Central America were passed at the recent national convention of the Graphic Communications International Union and at the Washington State AFL-CIO convention in August, and reportedly at the recent International Association of Machinists convention in Seattle. At the last meeting of the Cleveland Area UAW CAP council, some twenty-seven delegates signed up to form a new Peace Committee, proposed by a member of the Cleveland Conference Continuations Committee.

3) A cordial letter was received from Beth Perry of CISPES expressing a desire to keep in touch and cooperate. This is, I believe, the first correspondence from the national office of CISPES (despite a number of letters to them) and bodes well for future collaboration in building the anti-intervention movement.

4) Since I arrived in Minneapolis I heard that a leading local solidarity activist was informed by Leslie Cagan of Mobilization for Survival that the local coalition may be represented in the national steering committee for the spring demonstration, which will be discussed at the October 23 meeting in Washington.

Support for the perspectives laid out in the program adopted by the Emergency National Conference is mounting. The potential for building a united national April 13 demonstration is unquestionably there.

A massive opposition to intervention that even the SWP will not be able to abstain from is quite conceivable. We know that the party has been under pressure from rank and file members to get involved in what is happening. The members are told that the politics of the Cleveland conference represent the politics of the "splitters," not the politics of the party; that it's not correct to try to build a movement until the inevitable invasion--when the body bags

start coming back. The success of a spring action, the building of a movement, are bound to affect members of the SWP.

The on-going problems of uniting all the different political currents in the working class and antiwar movements for mass action despite their differences will continue. Sectarian and opportunist tendencies and factionalism such as we faced in the Vietnam war period will continue to make the tasks of building an independent, non-exclusionary mass movement against U.S. military intervention difficult.

But we will continue to deal with these problems in as principled a way as we know how, and through the democratic methods demonstrated at the Cleveland conference.

We faced similar problems when we helped organize the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in 1960. From that experience we should learn another important lesson. The Socialist Workers Party jumped to the defense of the Cuban revolution--contrary to a lot of stories that have been peddled recently. Reactionary gusanos and government forces immediately began organizing attacks, red-baiting, and other divisive actions.

In 1984, right after the first public announcement of the call for the Cleveland conference, President Reagan--in his usual inane way--commented on the call in an attempt to nip the action to unite the anti-intervention movement in the bud. That didn't do us one bit of harm! But it is an indication that we can again expect and should soberly prepare to meet more serious overt and covert government attempts to divide and immobilize the opposition to its interventionist foreign policies.

Our approach to work in the antiwar/anti-interventionist movement will continue to be a challenge to combine theory and practice for principled, effective action.

#### **CORRECTION**

An error appeared on page three of Bulletin IDOM No. 12. Mauricio Perez who was scheduled to speak at the Cleveland Emergency Anti-intervention Conference for the FDR-FMLN was unable to attend. Instead, Guillermo dePaz addressed the conference representing these organizations.

## EXCERPTS FROM GREETINGS

Dear Comrades:

We very much regret not being able to be with you at your conference. On behalf of the United Secretariat we reaffirm our opposition to your expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party because of your political views. We will continue to urge the SWP leadership to reverse its organizational course and immediately and collectively integrate you and the other expelled comrades. Until this is done we recognize that the comrades expelled from the SWP will have no choice other than organizing collectively, in order to participate in the World Congress discussion and carry out their responsibilities as revolutionary class-struggle militants. We wish your conference success in achieving these aims.

United Secretariat  
Bureau of the Fourth International

Dear Comrades:

I was hospitalized last January and still am not able to return to my home. That is why I have never attended any F.I.T. meetings or activities, since the F.I.T. was founded a week or so after I became ill. So I want to send you greetings and assurances of my complete solidarity with the F.I.T., which I support with all my heart and soul.

The task you have undertaken is probably the most difficult in the world today--to preserve the continuity of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism in the main stronghold of imperialism and capitalism. Many are the formerly fine people who set out on this course but were beaten into submission or silence by the pressures that are exerted on all of us. Your numbers are few, your enemies are relatively strong and utterly unscrupulous.

But one of the things I learned in the SWP and through personal experience is that you can't make an accurate estimate about a struggle by looking at only one side of it. You've got to look at all sides, including the problems that face your opponents. In the 1950s, during the Cold War witch hunt, there was hardly anybody in the party who thought I had any chance of winning my case for reinstatement against the mighty U.S. government; the odds seemed just too great. But if we had contradictions and weaknesses on our side, so did

the government, and since we persevered when other, so-called more realistic people would have given up, time allowed some of the government's contradictions to mature and come out into the open. And to the surprise of most people, we, despite our many weaknesses and omissions and mistakes, succeeded in winning the case.

Of course it's not a direct parallel, but our perseverance in principle and our persistence in practice have enabled us to survive an attack that was supposed to annihilate us entirely. But that didn't succeed. The present leadership, instead of acting like a triumphant and self-confident group that knows where it is going and how to get there, displays great nervousness, suspicion toward the party ranks, a tendency to isolate themselves further, and uncertainty about what maneuvers to follow toward the Fourth International. If we don't see and recognize the weaknesses that are visible among our opponents, which work to our advantage in the long run, we can get a one-sided and over-pessimistic picture.

Comradely,  
James Kutcher

Dear Comrades:

As one who, like most of you, has defended the theoretical and programmatic heritage of the SWP, and has consequently suffered the trauma of separation from the party, I send you the warmest greetings.

I intend to appeal my expulsion to the World Congress. I live in the hope that our party will, in the course of time, recognize its mistakes and get back on the right track.

Meanwhile, I send you my best wishes for your conference, and hope that it will serve to consolidate and strengthen the loyal opposition which must play an important part in that recovery.

With comradely greetings,  
Eileen Gersh

Comrades:

Circumstances prevent my being present with you on this signally important occasion. I send you my revolutionary greetings and a few personal observations.

I firmly believe that the defense of the program of the world socialist revolution in all of its three interrelated sectors which the F.I.T., though few in numbers, has undertaken, will prevail against the politically cowardly, revisionist, bureaucratic apparatus which has purged us from our party.

When I first joined the tiny Trotskyist movement 52 years ago, I did not dream that over half a century later I would find myself in an even smaller group "starting all over again" as someone (not in the F.I.T.) dolefully remarked with wringing hands. On the scale of one's own lifetime this can appear terribly disheartening. But I do not think we are "starting all over again."

Rather are we going through a necessary renewal, enriched by the lessons of the past. Our grasp of reality and our understanding of the theory of permanent revolution which it illuminates is deepened and strengthened as we are compelled to defend Marxism against its revision by the anti-Trotskyists in the Socialist Workers Party.

It takes time. History which can make sudden unexpected leaps can also drag its feet unexpectedly. I recall how Trotsky taught us that Marxists, historical materialists, do not judge the tempo of events subjectively, but try to objectively comprehend the forces that account for the changes in tempo and, rearmed, prepare for the next advance.

David Weiss

Greetings:

This first national conference of the F.I.T. is of the utmost importance in that it shows the determination of a Trotskyist minority in the American SWP to uphold and defend the revolutionary legacy of Bolshevik political and organizational theory. The majority leadership's revisionist attack cannot but have devastating consequences for the revolutionary movement, and all the more so if allowed to go unchallenged.

The final chapter in the history of the left opposition still remains to be written.

Comradely,  
Larry Stewart

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**A comprehensive study of Trotsky's  
perspectives on the revolutionary party,  
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**LEON TROTSKY  
and the  
ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES  
of the  
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**

By Dianne Feeley, Paul Le Blanc, and Tom Twiss



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## WHY "GUARDIAN" AND "MILITANT" DISTORTED CLEVELAND ANTIWAR CONFERENCE

By Dave Riehle

Participants in the Sept. 14-16 Emergency National Conference on Central America and the Caribbean held in Cleveland who read the Militant and the Guardian might well wonder, after seeing accounts of the conference in these papers, whether they attended the same gathering. Both of these papers gave the conference a few inches in issues in early October and clearly neither journal sought to attach much importance to it. The Guardian reported it as the second part of an article headed: "Mass Protests Planned at Tax Time Next Spring." The Militant's brief article was entitled: "Antiwar Conference Held in Cleveland." Neither one gave an accurate account.

According to the Guardian, a group "composed primarily of trade unionists and members of Socialist Action and the Socialist Workers Party met in Cleveland." The Guardian reports the attendance at "more than 600" and describes the conference as endorsed by 21 international unions.

The Militant says the conference was attended by "some 300 people." It says it was endorsed by "several local and regional labor officials" but that "support faded" as the date grew closer. Militant reporter Omari Musa plaintively remarks that right up to the eve of the conference the organizers were promising busloads of trade unionists, who never materialized.

The major role at the conference, Musa says, was played by "several small sects: the Internationalist Workers Party; Marxist-Leninist Party, U.S.A.; Socialist Action; International Socialists; Fourth Internationalist Tendency; Revolutionary Workers League; and Trotskyist Organization."

There is a third report available on the conference--that of the conference organizers themselves, sent out to over 2,000 endorsers and conference participants over the signature of Jerry Gordon, the central organizer of the conference.

Gordon, a United Food and Commercial Workers Union official and a former leader of the anti-Vietnam war movement, is widely known for his honesty. He reports that 650 people registered for the conference, including 175 trade unionists. He says the conference was endorsed by 2 international unions, 13 locals, 36 union presidents and 8 regional/district directors and presidents, as well as many others not from the labor movement. He does not report on the political affiliations of the conference participants.

Anyone who read the published materials issued by the conference organizers and attended the conference would have no basis for doubting the accuracy of Gordon's report. What, then, is the explanation for the inaccurate, and to some degree mutually contradictory, reports of the Militant and the Guardian?

In the case of the Guardian the explanation is quite straightforward. The Guardian, which does not generally favor broad-based mass actions as the central strategy of the anti-intervention movement, and is calling for the election of Walter Mondale as the main task of the movement, did not pay much attention to the conference and only got around to reporting on its decisions almost a month after the event. The result was a garbled mixture of fact, misinformation, and supposition.

This would seem to be sloppy reporting rather than malice. Malicious falsification would hardly explain why the Guardian erroneously reported that 21 international unions had endorsed the conference. They got that mixed up with the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, supported by 21 international union presidents, whose representative, Dave Dyson, spoke at the conference.

It is true that members of the Socialist Workers Party attended the conference, but if the Guardian reporter had been present she would have noted that the SWP contingent of about a dozen

did not vote or speak until the final plenary session, when several took the floor to argue against a bilateral nuclear freeze, and to express support for an Oct. 27 rally in New York City against U.S. occupation of Grenada, even though neither of these were germane to the discussion at that point.

It is possible that the Guardian's sources mistook members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action who played an active role in the conference for SWPers. Since the Militant has never reported to its readers that scores of well-known SWP members were expelled over the last year, it probably contributed to the Guardian error.

The Militant's distorted version of the Cleveland conference, however, cannot be attributed simply to inept reporting. Most of the facts in Gordon's report were available during the course of the conference itself. Moreover, the SWP delegates attended every plenary session and many workshops, and appeared to be preoccupied with statistical information, taking copious notes, and frequently making nose counts of those present.

Musa's report says "some 300 people" attended. Although a maximum of 300 or so were present at any given plenary, the total registration of 600 plus was announced there. In reporting scores of earlier antiwar conferences, the Militant has never placed the attendance at the maximum at any one session, and neither does any honest reporter.

The Militant says "several" union officials endorsed, but that support faded as the conference grew closer. This is a distortion. Two international unions, 13 locals, 36 local presidents, and many other local officials is not "several." No one withdrew their support for the conference. A letter sent out on Chicago CISPES stationery discouraged attendance, but was later viewed as a mistake by its author. The most under-represented component of the anti-intervention forces at the conference was not labor, but the traditional national peace organizations such as SANE, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and others who called for a by-invitation-only meeting in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 25 to attempt to set the agenda for spring actions.

The major role at the conference was not "played by small sects." Several small radical groups, notably the IWP, the RWL, and the Trotskyist Organization

exploited conference democracy by persistently introducing proposals counterposed to the organizing committee's perspective and orientation, and disproportionately taking up plenary discussion time, despite the fact that they were clearly rejected by the conference majority. This is hardly a new phenomenon for Musa, and was never before sufficient for a political characterization.

The Militant's amalgam conceals the fact that members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Socialist Action, and the Socialist Labor Party, which Musa does not mention, supported the proposals of the conference organizers for massive, broad-based spring mobilizations against U.S. military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

Most importantly, the Militant's report obscures the fact that the Cleveland conference was the first real attempt to hold a broad national conference on U.S. intervention in Central America on an open, non-exclusive basis, since the victory of the Nicaraguan revolution in July 1979. The impressive participation of trade unionists and rank and file anti-intervention and solidarity activists testifies that such a meeting was long overdue.

The leading role in initiating the conference, building support for it and fighting for the organizing committee's proposals on the floor was taken by authentic trade union leaders such as Carl Lindenmuth, president of a USWA local at Republic Steel in Cleveland, Ron Weisen, president of a USWA local in Homestead, Pa., Al Lannon, president of ILWU Local 6 in San Francisco, Carl Edelman, UAW rank-and-file leader in Cleveland, and many others. The composition of the continuations committee elected at the conference reflects this.

This conference clearly represented the high water mark of trade union participation in the struggle against imperialist war at least since the inception of the anti-Vietnam war. This is an objective fact, regardless of the inevitable limitations that exist at this stage of building the movement, and should rightly be welcomed by all supporters of the revolutions in Central America.

It is true that this conference, successful as it was, did not include all the forces presently opposed to U.S. policy in Central America and the Caribbean, including the Black and Hispanic communities, as well as the more conservative peace organizations. This

merely delineates the political obligations of those who have a clear perspective on building a powerful anti-intervention movement, as the conference organizers repeatedly emphasized. Participation of the SWP in this effort would have been a big help in broadening its appeal and giving it more authority.

However, thanks to the crucial initiative taken by Jerry Gordon and other conference organizers, predominantly trade unionists, the possibility now exists for the first time for the broad array of organizations and political forces that oppose U.S. policy to unite in common action around the perspective of massive mobilizations this April in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and Los Angeles. For the first time, the majority sentiment against military intervention might be tapped, including the ranks of the labor movement, in an unprecedentedly powerful demonstration. This would be a historic step forward in staying the hand of American imperialism.

Some thoughts along these lines must have crossed the minds of veteran SWP members who were instructed by their party leaders--at the party convention held this August in Oberlin--that their major work against U.S. intervention must be limited to urging fellow workers to travel to Nicaragua. Many party members helped to carry out just such a perspective as that put forward at Cleveland during the struggle against the Vietnam war. Today, with far more massive sentiment against military intervention than existed at the beginning of the anti-Vietnam war struggle, especially within the unions, party members participate in united front activities against U.S. policy primarily as literature and travel agents.

A reader of the Militant would find, however, no expression of this abstentionist policy. Militant editorials week after week hammer away at the need for broad-based united protest actions, particularly those which can involve sectors of the labor movement. Mel Mason, SWP presidential candidate, echoes this appeal in public speeches.

A typical Militant editorial on July 6, 1984, referred to resolutions opposing U.S. intervention in Nicaragua adopted by ACTWU and AFSCME and urged: "Those resolutions reflect the sentiments of millions of workers. These sentiments can and should be turned into public protest activities to demand: U.S. hands off Nicaragua!" Editorials on

July 27, Sept. 14, Sept. 28, and Oct. 5 voiced similar views.

It would be easy for the uninitiated to conclude that the Cleveland conference was just what the Militant had been calling for. That seems to be what the Guardian reporter assumed. Nevertheless the Militant hardly mentioned the conference while it was being built and party members were told that it was a politically narrow charade being conducted by sectarians. This view was reaffirmed through Musa's hatchet job after the conference took place.

As has been seen, an objective review of the facts does not support the conclusion that the conference was narrow and insignificant. It must be concluded that the Militant's lack of support for the conference and its perspectives rests on something other than what it says in its report. A forthright expression of its real views could have benefited party members, supporters, and all supporters of the revolutions in Central America. This was not provided because it would have revealed that the SWP central leadership expresses two contradictory views on the Central American revolutions and the fight against U.S. intervention, depending on what audience it is addressing.

This is not merely an assertion. The SWP leadership repeatedly explains to its members and close sympathizers that essentially nothing can be done to oppose the U.S. war drive except to sell the Militant at factory gates and political demonstrations, and to make speeches in unions where the 800 or so party members happen to be present. Only when the U.S. troops actually are massively committed to combat in Central America and GI's start to come home in body bags will it be possible to mobilize a real antiwar movement, especially one that can draw in the trade unions and the working class, it says.

On the other hand, the view that such a struggle can and must be built now is reiterated through party candidates and its press, as the example cited above shows. What is the source of this two-faced policy?

Fundamentally, the central leadership of the SWP has lost confidence in the capacity of the American working class to think, to understand, and to act. This is embodied in its pessimistic conclusion that American workers will only participate in an antiwar struggle when their sons and brothers are being killed. It discounts the possibility that they have learned something from

Vietnam. It assumes that even if some antiwar sentiment exists today in the unions it is insufficient to overcome the pro-imperialist policies of the top AFL-CIO leadership.

This, too, is not simply an assertion. A careful review of Militant editorials reveals that the one manifestation of antiwar sentiment in the unions that is taken note of and referred to positively is the expression of opposition to U.S. policy by top officials, or at conventions where little takes place that does not have the approval of these officials. Militant editorials frequently take the form of advice to these leaders on what opinions they should express vis-a-vis U.S. policy.

The Cleveland conference represented a serious attempt by unionists already active in the anti-intervention movement, including rank and filers, radicals, and secondary officials, to find a vehicle for expressing opposition to U.S. policy that could help the movement to get a hearing in the unions and begin to mobilize the sentiment that already exists. It is quite revealing that this sort of initiative, as opposed to resolutions at national conventions, fails to get favorable reviews from the Militant.

This conservative passivity on the part of the SWP leaders is not expressed publicly. The real audience the party press is directed to are the leaders of the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran revolutions, whom the party leaders hope will help them overcome the difficult task of building a revolutionary party in the heart of imperialist America by administratively designating them as their U.S. representative. By portraying the party as a dynamic, influential, and effective working class organization, rooted deep in the unions, they hope to regroup with the Cuban Communist Party, the FSLN, and the FMLN in some new revolutionary international.

This bureaucratic conception of how revolutionaries win authority in their own country, while abstaining from the class struggle, would be laughable, if it did not involve the squandering of precious political capital accumulated

over the proud 56-year history of the Socialist Workers Party. The futile and pathetic hope that real leaders of real revolutions can be flim-flammed by window dressing reveals a real lack of respect for the actual capacities of the Cubans, Nicaraguans, and Salvadorans.

These revolutionaries are quite capable of determining for themselves what is actually going on in the United States, including who is doing what in the anti-intervention movement. They also call, as does the Militant, for massive, visible, public protest against U.S. policy. But unlike the central leaders of the SWP they put this into practice and demonstratively support and participate in these activities in the U.S. and elsewhere, and urge their extension.

The SWP leadership is trapped between its contradictory positions. The only way it can reconcile them without liquidating one or the other is through dishonesty, as Omari Musa demonstrates in his report. Any real modifications in the SWP's abstentionist policy would inevitably give credence to the views fought for by the expelled opposition. It would also bring party members into direct contact with expelled members and other activists working against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean; and this, in turn, would make the party leadership's accusations about "petty bourgeois radicals in retreat" qualitatively more difficult to sustain.

At this juncture the result is the real tragedy that the Socialist Workers Party is not sending its committed and effective cadre into developing the urgently needed mass opposition to the U.S. war drive. Unlike the authors of the Communist Manifesto who said "the Communists have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat," the SWP leaders are placing their factional interests over and above the needs of the workers and farmers of Central America and the Caribbean.

Every supporter and honest member of the SWP should urge that this dead-end policy be reversed and call upon the party to throw itself into building the spring mobilization.



## LOST OPPORTUNITIES: THE SWP'S 1984 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By Frank Lovell

The main reasons militant workers and radicals should support the 1984 election campaigns of the Socialist Workers Party were clear from the beginning. They were especially compelling for Marxists, the most convincing of them being the SWP's Marxist heritage representing 56 years of continuous struggle to build a revolutionary socialist party in this country and internationally.

### POSITIVE FEATURES

Mel Mason and Andrea Gonzalez, the SWP presidential and vice-presidential candidates, campaigned against the evils of capitalism on a world scale, and in particular against the economic and military invasion of U.S. imperialism in Central America and the Caribbean. They sought to distinguish themselves and their party as the most consistent antiwar campaigners. From start to finish the SWP campaign remained completely independent of capitalist politics, maintaining a clear working class position against U.S. capitalism and its political parties.

The 13-point campaign platform of the SWP, in addition to its antiwar plank, called for full employment, protection from inflation, free education and medical care, full democratic rights for all and the promotion of women's rights, a labor party based on the unions and an independent Black party, international working class solidarity, the establishment of a workers and farmers government, and socialism. It pledged to fight against union busting, racism, and farm foreclosures.

The SWP campaign was distinguished from the campaigns of the Communist Party and smaller groups like the Workers World Party by its working class intransigence in the electoral arena. The question of supporting capitalist candidates is one of the fundamental differences between these parties and the

SWP. Both the CP and the WWP, while campaigning for socialism, declared their willingness to endorse and support candidates of the Democratic Party "under certain conditions." Both endorsed the Jesse Jackson campaign for president on the Democratic ticket in the primaries. The WWP candidate for president later announced that his party would not have launched its own campaign if Jackson had won the Democratic nomination. The CP campaigned against the evils of "Reaganism" in such a way as to support Mondale, "the lesser evil." Their 1984 campaign followed the Stalinists' traditional pattern of lesser evil electoral politics, introduced in 1936 when they campaigned to "defeat Landon at all costs" in order, as was later claimed, "to insure the election of President Roosevelt."

The SWP, in contrast to the others, exposed the fraudulent two-party system of the ruling class, and criticized all attempts (such as Jackson's) to transform the Democratic Party and to garner votes for capitalist candidates. "No matter who joins these parties, or votes for them, or runs for office on their ticket, the Democrats and Republicans represent the bosses," says the SWP. This difference in principle on the question of working class political action was, from the beginning, a decisive reason for supporting the SWP instead of other parties on the left.

In this election year, when most radicals had succumbed to the pressures of Reagan's reactionary policies and the blandishments of the anti-Reagan wing of the capitalist class, the SWP's electioneering against the Democrats and Republicans could have contributed more than it did to the political education of working people in this country. The shame and the pity is that this campaign failed to reach as many voters as it could have, solely because of self-imposed limitations.

## PURPOSE OF CAMPAIGN

The revolutionary socialist party enters electoral campaigns in bourgeois countries to get the widest possible hearing for its program to transform society, and to win new recruits to the party. Electioneering is part of the continuous struggle to maintain, educate, develop, and advance the party. It is only one of many party-building activities, but it is essential in the industrial societies of the advanced capitalist countries. This is especially so in the United States because the ruling class here effectively monopolizes the electoral arena, having thwarted the development of a mass working class party. Entering this political arena under these circumstances, handicapped and restricted, the small vanguard working class party has limited opportunities to explain how society can be changed and socialism achieved. Revolutionary electoral strategy consists in making the most of these limited opportunities.

## TECHNIQUES AND GAINS

Since 1948 the SWP has been an active participant in the national electoral arena. Evelyn Sell in her "Memoirs of a Veteran SWP Election Campaigner" (Bulletin No. 7, May 1984) reviewed many of the major election campaigns of the party during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. She described some of the electioneering techniques that were acquired. She explained some of the lessons that were learned while campaigning in support of strike actions, civil rights battles, organizations defending the Cuban revolution, and antiwar demonstrations. And she told about the gains that were made.

These gains could not have been made if the party had neglected other areas of work such as participation in the unions, helping to organize civil rights protest actions and demonstrations, mobilizing defenders of the Cuban revolution, and assuming leadership positions in the anti-Vietnam war movement. Some gains from all these experiences, including electioneering, are counted in terms of experience and education. They are intangibles. But other gains can be measured.

One important index to the success of an election campaign is the number of new recruits it brings in. Often these recruits join as a result of many experiences with the party, not only because of the election campaign. But it is the campaign, if properly conducted, that brings them in at the time. And

they can be counted. Elections are, or should be, the times of heaviest recruitment for the party.

The SWP's 1976 presidential campaign, when Peter Camejo and Willie Mae Reid were the candidates, won more recruits than any other. Over 700 new members joined the party in 1976. It was our longest campaign, and in some ways our most successful.

By contrast, less than 100 new members were recruited in 1980, when Andrew Pulley and Matilde Zimmermann were our presidential ticket. This was a warning signal that something was wrong.

Evelyn Sell recalls that "Our presidential campaigns were marked by innovations and record-breaking statistics from 1968 on." But that ended rather abruptly in 1980. It wasn't because the Pulley-Zimmermann ticket failed to adequately represent the party. Nor was it because there were fewer opportunities.

A big reason for this drastic decline in recruits was that serious changes were taking place in many party activities and attitudes in 1980. The candidates seemed to be campaigning in the same way as in 1976, maybe not for so long (15 months instead of nearly 2 years) but in some ways better it was said. The Pulley-Zimmermann ticket stood for international working class solidarity, against war, for support to the revolutions in Nicaragua and Grenada, and for a labor party in the U.S. But unlike our previous campaigns, the one in 1980 was not connected with what the party was doing in other areas of work, especially in the unions and on the campuses.

## EARLY START REJECTED

We have learned from past campaigns that it pays to start early. Workers are usually interested in the socialist message when talk about the coming election begins. In these early stages, when the capitalist candidates have not yet been chosen, when broad social and economic issues are discussed, and when capitalist propaganda has not yet buried the basic issues, politically interested workers are thinking about how they can have some control over the government's anti-union policies. That is when socialists who can explain how capitalism works and what workers can do to make a better life for themselves are listened to most readily. By explaining the need for a labor party to overcome the evils of capitalism, SWP campaigners win support for their program and recruits to their party.

The Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the SWP National Committee advocated an early start for the 1984 campaign. It urged the selection of a ticket before August 27, 1983, so that the party could present its ticket and platform to the more than 200,000 people who attended the Jobs and Freedom march in Washington, D.C., that day.

But the Barnes faction in control of the party apparatus was not interested in starting the election campaign early and did not announce a ticket until the very end of 1983. By this time the leadership was preoccupied with a different kind of campaign--to revise the fundamental program of the party, restructure it organizationally, and purge all defenders of the Marxist heritage passed on to us through the prodigious work of Trotsky and Cannon. This new orientation had been secretly under consideration in the leadership as far back as the 1980 election campaign, which accounts for the uncertainty and lack of focus or purpose the party suffered during that campaign.

It was more than coincidence that the Barnes faction expelled all critical or oppositional members of the party at the start of 1984 just as the presidential campaign was announced. In order to quarantine the SWP members from contact with their just-expelled comrades, the party leadership also decreed that none of the purged members (now called "splitters" and "disrupters") would be allowed to attend any public election rallies of the SWP, or any of its other public activities. It didn't matter that the expelled members, who organized the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action, endorsed the Mason-Gonzalez ticket and volunteered to work for it--they were barred from all contact with the election campaign. In this way, a very narrow and mean spirit was infused into the campaign from the beginning. Independent-minded workers, who should have been won to the SWP campaign, must have been repelled to see some Mason-Gonzalez supporters excluded from the campaign for internal factional reasons.

### "LOW KEY"

After announcing the presidential campaign and letting it be known that it would be "low key," the SWP leadership showed little interest in the day-to-day work of the party's major public activity this year. They were too busy preparing for the twice-postponed national convention that was finally held in

August 1984, and in conducting factional maneuvers against the leadership of the Fourth International (who were barred from attendance at the August convention). So they developed the brilliant notion of turning the entire campaign over to the Young Socialist Alliance in order to enable the SWP leaders to remain engrossed in factional activity.

This decision was explained to the party as "not unusual" and party members who wondered how effective the relatively inexperienced YSA leaders would be were told that the YSA had also managed the DeBerry-Shaw campaign in 1964. The fact that the 1964 campaign was not well managed, that virtually no national literature was published, and that it produced very few gains for the party was not reported.

A low-key campaign, reminiscent of the 1964 effort, is certainly what we had this year. Campaign literature and materials were sparse and poorly distributed. TV and radio time for the candidates was minimal, partly the result of inadequate work to win it. Rallies were often dull and mired in routine. Little interest was shown in the millions of new voters registered this year. Relatively few contacts were won to the campaign, and even fewer recruits. Many members of the SWP are breathing a sigh of relief now that the campaign is ending. They sensed that much of their work was in vain as the party turned its back on the new opportunities this year. Instead of reaching out and growing through the campaign, the party leadership dragged the party deeper into self-imposed isolation.

### A DISMAL OUTLOOK

The main problem with this campaign was that it offered no solution to the problems of workers in this country or elsewhere. Its literature sloganized for "the formation of a labor party, based on a fighting trade union movement," but without sufficient explanation or concreteness. The theme of the campaign was that revolutionary changes are inevitable sometime in the future but that the fate of the workers and poor everywhere until the revolution is to suffer. The apparent role of the revolutionary party is to offer sympathy and solidarity for the present, and to wait for that time in the future when the downtrodden can no longer endure their suffering and begin to fight back. Then we can reorganize society.

This dismal outlook tainted the campaign and undermined it from the beginning to end. The theme was restated many times, as in the following paragraph from "Support the Socialist Workers Campaign," an article by Laura Garza, a YSA leader and youth coordinator, in the Oct. 19 Militant (which also finally printed the SWP's election platform):

"In order for the ruling class to reverse the international crisis of its system, it must cut much deeper--and it

intends to. The only way it can accomplish that is by directly attacking the unions and the hard-won gains that Blacks, Latinos, and women did make in the last three decades. But our side won't give up these things without putting up a massive fight."

How this massive fight will be organized, what workers should do now to defend themselves against the capitalist onslaught, remained unsaid.

October 25, 1984

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# NICARAGUA: A PEOPLE ARMED

by Haskell Berman

[NOTE--The following article is based on a talk delivered in New York City on September 7, 1984]

First I would like to dispel any illusion that I am an expert on Nicaragua. My observations are a result of the good fortune to have spent eight days in July on a whirl-wind tour of this small country (about the size of New Jersey) with a well-planned itinerary.

The tour was organized by the Philadelphia Labor Committee for Democracy and Human Rights in Central America and the Caribbean. We were a delegation of 34. Included were presidents from three local unions, members and union activists from 11 international unions from the Philadelphia area and a few non-unionists who were solidarity activists sympathetic to labor. We went as a fact-finding mission and organized our own itinerary based on information from a solidarity activist who had spent two years in Nicaragua and Honduras.

As a labor delegation we had extensive interviews with both pro- and anti-Sandinista trade union leaders: the secretary general of the CTN (Central Trabajadores Nicaragua) -- the second largest and an opposition union in Nicaragua; Festalud, the Health Workers union; and the CST, the pro-Sandinista union. All of the requests that we made in Nicaragua were provided and facilitated by Tour Nica, the government tour agency.

Our visit occurred shortly after the 5th anniversary celebration of the Revolution. From the 27th to the 30th of July the government initiated a national party and voter registration campaign. During these four days 65% of the population was registered, all plants and work places were closed, and workers were paid for their time off.

The six opposition parties refused to register for the elections unless their 9 demands were met by the Electoral Council. The FSLN press stated that under no condition could or would the government agree to three of these demands: to allow the contras to participate in the elections; to end press censorship dealing with matters of military security; and to raise the age of voters and impose restrictions on the

youth and military to restrict their voting rights. They charged the opposition bloc with seeking to discredit the electoral process. Seeing the massive voter registration and that their demands had been unsuccessful, the opposition requested an extension of the party registration period. The Electoral Council refused to accede to this request and on the 5th of August ruled the opposition parties that had not registered out of the election process and without the benefits of the Electoral Law passed in February. With this ruling a section of the CTN which was part of the "democratic coordinating committee" opposition bloc began to criticize their abstentionist position as a mistake. This opens up an interesting process of differentiation within the opposition trade union movement, particularly since the right to strike has now been restored by the Sandinista government.

The Electoral Law provides:

1. \$214,000 U.S. to each party registered.
2. Equal specified time blocks on both TV and radio on both public and private networks for each party.
3. An inspector of each party at each registration and voting center.
4. Indelible ink on the finger of each registrant and voter.

We saw no evidence that oppositionists were presently intimidated by the regime. They spoke openly and freely and were extremely critical. There was criticism of government policies with regard to the restriction on the right to strike, censorship, the election policy, and for the defense of the contras right to vote. In one case we saw a picture of a CTN organizer who claimed he had been beaten by CST goons in an organizing drive. We saw no evidence of police or military repression of any group of citizens. However, we did see hundreds of youth, both men and women, in military fatigues and often armed,

who represented not a force against the people but the people armed. All evidence puts the lie to Reagan's description that Nicaragua is a totalitarian dungeon. It is a camp armed against intervention and against the contras.

Billboards and posters abound. Many are from the opposition parties. Those from the government and the FSLN call for patriotic defense of the homeland -- not for a workers' state. Their content is for the defense of the democratic nationalist state. The absence of Socialist propaganda is almost startling. You would not know you are in a country that has a leadership that claims to be Socialist or Marxist. What we heard of official propaganda sounded like the Revolution was democratic, nationalist -- and classless. Occasionally there is some graffiti scribbled on a wall or bridge with a hammer and sickle, an announcement of the Young Communist organization, or the star and letters of the PSN which is the Moscow-oriented C.P. In one village we saw the slogan "Carlos Marx has changed the world." One possible explanation is that we were there immediately after the celebration of the anniversary of the revolution in July, and the slogans and posters which had been up for that event were all being taken down.

Some posters and slogans that we saw sought to remind the people of the city that they, too, are on the front line -- that the basic weapon of security is production. They call on support from mothers for the conscription. For Nicaragua is a country at war. When the plane lands you see the defenses about the airstrip.

Nicaragua faces many problems. Those who support the revolution must be aware of its difficulties and contradictions. The contras and imperialists understand them very well. As you travel about the countryside you see hundreds of youth carrying weapons but going about their normal activities as workers. Indeed, in cities people behave as though there is no war, though khaki uniforms are often evident.

At the airport you see Nicaraguans returning from the U.S. with expensive stereo players, and other expensive consumer products. You begin to realize that there are some people in this economically strapped country who have resources which the majority do not. The exchange rate is 28 cordobas for a dollar (4 cents per cordoba), and we are told that on the Black Market you can get between 100 and 200 cordobas for a dollar.

On the plane I had explained the purpose of our delegation to the man sitting in the next seat. He turned out to be a cattle rancher who cautioned me to "Get the full story." -- in other words, the bourgeois perspective. We visited a cigar factory in Esteli with 150 workers. They work on piece work and the plant has no ventilating fans to remove the sickening fumes. The owner lives in Florida and has an arrangement where he sells his product in the U.S.

Unlike Cuba the country is not isolated by water. It is bound by land on the north and south which means that trade, materials, and people can cross its borders. So one sees new automobiles, trucks, and buses -- some with Panama auto dealer stickers. For those who can afford it travel seems less restricted externally. Small peddlers abound everywhere people congregate. Enterprises of one or two persons amount to 30% of the economy.

What has been nationalized? Somoza's properties; air, sea, and land transportation; ranches and plantations where owners have abandoned or underutilized their properties or where owners have acted against the revolution. The Sandinistas advocate and practice a mixed economy through the government's policy, which leads them to a contradiction. Land reform equals land for the landless and disgruntled campesino. But protection of landowner property means that in some cases farm laborers who seized estates were forced to return them.

Policies to provide employment and increased production dictate class relations: In Matagalpa we visited a grocery store stacked with empty food cans in the windows and on the shelves. There is no foreign credit to import canned foods. On the other hand the cigar manufacturer who hires 150 workers and lives in Florida makes cigars and sells them in the U.S. Large rice, sugar, and tobacco plantations that require extensive capital investment are in operation. Some have new equipment and vast systems of irrigation that are not nationalized. They are privately owned, and are supported by government loans. In one of these the sugar workers struck during a period when the FSLN government had outlawed strikes.

In Esteli there is a clothing factory cooperative. The workers are all women who work on a piece work incentive system. We asked how wage rates were determined and were told on a quotient of total production. The plant was

provided with sewing machines donated by a foundation in Holland.

The FSLN and the government which it dominates clearly have popular support. The people are trusted to bear arms and from all appearances and reports the contras seem unable to destabilize this régime and are taking serious blows. This in turn increases the danger of more direct U.S. intervention.

Even oppositionists to the Sandinista government publicly proclaim their opposition to U.S. intervention. This may not always be their true feeling but they are driven to this public posture because of the historic role of the U.S. in Nicaragua and the deep feelings of hostility generated in the memory of the mass of Nicaraguan people. The Sandinista leadership understands the necessity for the mobilization of the masses in their mass organizations. Even so they seem to have reacted slowly and conservatively on a number of issues: Land reform and land to the peasantry; opposition to speculators; removal of censorship; the right to strike.

The head of the Casa Journalist claimed that the government used censorship of La Prensa to prevent speculation and inflation on the commodity market. We wondered why they did not go after the speculators directly. Recently the emergency restrictions have been reduced: the right to strike has been restored; areas of censorship are limited more directly to military matters. Caught in the contradiction of the need for production and defense of workers' interests, the government seems to have moved from coercion to persuasion.

In the recent strike against the "Victoria" brewery, the leadership of the Sandinista-led CST union opposed the strike and took the government's line that it was the patriotic duty and in the national interest for workers to remain on the job. This nationalized industry is one of the most profitable in the country. The workers pointed this out and proclaimed that their need for wage increases to meet the high prices of goods and to support their families was their highest and most immediate duty and they went on strike.

The war has wrought its toll not only in deaths and property damaged but in the many construction projects planned and initiated but not completed. Labor power is lost in the military draft of youth 16 to 27. International aid is prevalent with youth worker bri-

gades coming from many countries of Western Europe. We met West German youth who spent a year in the south of the country in rural areas building homes and working harvests in areas subject to contra attacks.

The need to increase employment and production to meet export plans requires capital which is not readily available from Western banks because of the country's poor credit rating. This in turn forces the FSLN to other sources -- the Soviet Union and other workers' states. Mixed economy and pluralism is a double-edged sword. It does address some immediate problems, but in the long haul it could strengthen the hand of the bourgeoisie.

For the present the electoral process is a coup for the FSLN and the government. It has discredited and possibly served to divide the opposition. It provides an image of credibility for Latin American and Western Europeans who, for their own selfish reasons, are unaligned with the U.S. policy of invasion. This opens a path for further negotiations with the Contadora group. For the mass of Nicaraguans it is seen as the first honest and legitimate election in 50 years.

Members of the tour had an opportunity to question Dr. Leonel Urbano, the Sub-Editor of Barricada and a member of the Sandinista Front about charges that the Labor Law is the same law as existed under Somoza, that the Front violates free press through censorship, that the government's restriction of the right to strike is opposed to the interests of labor. His response follows:

"Our revolution is only 5 years old. We are confronted with many problems and priorities for a country that has suffered war. We are still at war with the Contras and our first priority is defense of our country and production. We censor only military information that can be used by the Contras who seek to destroy our infrastructure. They seek to attack our economy and destroy whatever we seek to build. Our teachers and technical specialists who go out to the countryside are targeted to be killed. As to the Labor Law: Yes, it is true that the Labor Law under Somoza still exists. However, a new schedule of wages and job categories is in the process of being initiated. On the whole the real wages of workers has been raised three-fold when you consider that in addition the establishment of free education, health, and day care centers has raised as well the social

wage of all workers. Rationing of basic food items and their price control assures all workers an adequate supply of basic food items and keeps the cost of living down. Union organization has been encouraged and abuses by management are not tolerated. Like any government at war, restrictions on the right to strike are necessary. We look upon that as only a necessary emergency measure. [On August 7th the N.Y. Times reported

that Daniel Ortega announced the restoration of the right of labor to strike.] Many things are in the process of changing and we do not intend to write a labor law that does not include such changes. You cannot legislate a new culture that has new social relations. The law must reflect the new relations and culture and we have not yet had that hindsight necessary to be able to change the labor law."

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## **PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN NICARAGUA**

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# JAMES P. CANNON ON PERMANENT REVOLUTION

Notes for a Lecture in 1932

[Editorial note: The present leadership of the Socialist Workers Party has "discarded" Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and wants the Fourth International to do the same at its coming World Congress. As a contribution to this debate, we print below an exposition and defense of permanent revolution by James P. Cannon (1890-1974), a founder of both the SWP and the FI.

The English translation of the first volume of Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution (HRR) was published in the United States at the end of February 1932, when Trotsky lived in exile in Turkey. Less than a month later, on March 25, Cannon, who was then a central leader of the Communist League of America, gave a talk about the new book at the CLA's New York Forum, which was held at the Labor Temple.

The title of Cannon's talk was "Marxist History and Bourgeois Criticism (Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution and its reviewers)." No transcript was made of this talk, but Cannon's notes for it have survived.

Some of the points in Cannon's notes were merely brief reminders, without elaboration, of things he wanted to be sure to mention. We reproduce them unchanged, with the warning that the reader will have to make a bit of an effort to mentally flesh out the notes and make the proper transitions from one to another. Some familiarity with Cannon's published writings and speeches will be a help, although this is not a requisite. Other points in Cannon's notes listed citations from books and papers that he intended to read and discuss; in most of these cases we have been able to supply the citations from the literature of that period.

Cannon quoted extensively from Trotsky's early work Results and Prospects (1906), using the mediocre English translation by Moissaye J. Olgin in a Trotsky compilation, Our Revolution (Henry Holt and Co., 1918). We have taken the liberty of replacing those passages with the later and better translation by Brian Pearce in The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects (Pathfinder Press, 1969).]

1. The Russian revolution presented a "paradox," both to apologists of the bourgeois system, especially the liberals, on the one side, and to a certain school of Marxism on the other.

2. There is nothing more amusing, barren and futile than the explanations of the bourgeois.

a) "Their revolution," they think, but in some way or other they lost it.

b) History played a dirty trick on them.

3. As for the Social Democratic "Marxists," they demonstrate very "scientifically" that the backward economic development of Russia simply excluded the possibility of the proletariat coming to power. Others deny it yet--Hillquit.[1]

4. There they referred to Marx, or rather Engels, in Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution, printed in the New York Tribune ("cap press"):

"The evolution of the conditions of existence for a numerous, strong, con-

centrated and intelligent proletariat goes hand in hand with the development of the conditions of existence for a numerous, wealthy, concentrated and powerful middle [capitalist] class," etc.

--Bourgeoisie must have conquered political power and remodelled state.

5. The pseudo-Marxists, the formal Marxists, were as surprised as a man who suddenly finds himself the father of a child which he had no reason to expect.

6. The only ones who have been able to explain the Russian revolution are the ones who foresaw it, led it, and secured its existence afterward -- the Bolsheviks, and Trotsky in the front rank.

7. These facts give an exceptional interest to the new book. The subject deserves a series of lectures, and really requires them in order to do justice to the many-sided question.

8. For example, one could explain the revolution, as it actually occurred, on the basis of prognoses written by Trotsky long before the events, and find the answer to all the important questions which puzzle the bourgeois liberal and socialist historians even today.

9. Trotsky found the key to the paradox, before it was solved in the revolution itself, in the peculiarities of Russian development, in the imperialist world chain, and the theory of permanent revolution.

10. Sidney Hook[2] wrote: "Unquestionably Leon Trotsky's History is the most remarkable piece of writing that has yet appeared on the greatest event since the French Revolution."

11. That verdict belongs to the book without a question. Among half-way serious Marxists it cannot be disputed. The Stalinists do not even venture to review the book. It would be like asking a man to review a photograph and prove its error. They let it alone, and wisely.

12. Nevertheless, the book with all its amazing literary sweep, analysis and factual chronicle woven together did not strike me with the freshness of a new revelation. That was because I was already familiar--from previous reading -- with the main theses. In recent days I have been devoting some of my spare time to a study of the pre-revolutionary writings of Trotsky.[3]

--There those who declared the revolution of the proletariat impossible were disposed of theoretically.

--The new book merely fills in the historic facts and shows, by the previously elaborated theory, how they had

come to happen. "Thus and not otherwise."

Such is the power of the Marxist theory --the power to foretell.

13. [Citations from Trotsky's] Results and Prospects:

"The proletariat grows and becomes stronger with the growth of capitalism. In this sense the development of capitalism is also the development of the proletariat towards dictatorship. But the day and the hour when the power will pass into the hands of the working class depends directly not upon the level attained by the productive forces but upon relations in the class struggle, upon the international situation, and, finally, upon a number of subjective factors: the traditions, the initiative and the readiness to fight of the workers.

"It is possible for the workers to come to power in an economically backward country sooner than in an advanced country. In 1871 the workers deliberately took power in their hands in petty-bourgeois Paris -- true, for only two months, but in the big-capitalist centres of Britain and the United States the workers have never held power for so much as an hour. To imagine that the dictatorship of the proletariat is in some way automatically dependent on the technical development and resources of a country is a prejudice of 'economic' materialism simplified to absurdity. This point of view has nothing in common with Marxism....[pp. 62-63]

"Within the framework of the bourgeois revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, the objective task of which was to establish the domination of capital, the dictatorship of the sansculottes was found to be possible. This dictatorship was not simply a passing episode, it left its impress upon the entire ensuing century, and this in spite of the fact that it was very quickly shattered against the enclosing barriers of the bourgeois revolution. In the revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, the direct objective tasks of which are also bourgeois, there emerges as a near prospect the inevitable, or at least the probable, political domination of the proletariat. The proletariat itself will see to it that this domination does not become a mere passing 'episode', as some realist philistines hope. But we can even now ask ourselves: is it inevitable that the proletarian dictatorship should be shattered against

the barriers of the bourgeois revolution, or is it possible that in the given world-historical conditions, it may discover before it the prospect of victory on breaking through these barriers? Here we are confronted by questions of tactics: should we consciously work towards a working-class government in proportion as the development of the revolution brings this stage nearer, or must we at that moment regard political power as a misfortune which the bourgeois revolution is ready to thrust upon the workers, and which it would be better to avoid?"[pp. 67-68]

14. Bourgeois revolution.

15. Democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

16. Trotsky's theory [from Results and Prospects]:

"In the event of a decisive victory of the revolution, power will pass into the hands of that class which plays a leading role in the struggle -- in other words, into the hands of the proletariat. Let us say at once that this by no means precludes revolutionary representatives of non-proletarian social groups entering the government. They can and should be in the government: a sound policy will compel the proletariat to call to power the influential leaders of the urban petty-bourgeoisie, of the intellectuals and of the peasantry. The whole problem consists in this: who will determine the content of the government's policy, who will form within it a solid majority?...

"It is sufficient to try to imagine a revolutionary democratic government without representatives of the proletariat to see immediately the senselessness of such a conception. The refusal of the social-democrats to participate in a revolutionary government would render such a government quite impossible and would thus be equivalent to a betrayal of the revolution. But the participation of the proletariat in a government is also objectively most probable, and permissible in principle, only as a dominating and leading participation. One may, of course, describe such a government as the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, a dictatorship of the proletariat, peasantry and intelligentsia, or even a coalition government of the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie, but the question nevertheless remains: who is to wield the hegemony in the government itself, and through it in the country? And when

we speak of a workers' government, by this we reply that the hegemony should belong to the working class."[pp. 69-70]

a) Bourgeois came too late.

b) Only the proletariat could carry through the democratic revolution.

17. Peculiarities of Russian development.

a) Slow tempo.

b) Uneven development and combined development:

1) "Backwardness thrust Germany and the U.S. ahead of England."

2) Russia skipped over slow process.

3) Capital from abroad--no solid growth accumulated in epoch of craft-guilds and manufacture.

4) Industry, developed on modern scale and with extraordinary speed.

5) On eve of revolution (1914): Workers in small enterprises of less than 100 workers:

In U.S. -- 38% of total industrial workers

In Russia -- only 17.8%

Giant enterprises of more than 1000 workers:

In U.S. -- 17.8% of total

In Russia -- 41.4%

In Petrograd and Moscow even higher: 44.4% and 57.3%.

Results:

a) Small bourgeois class separated from people.

b) Concentrated proletariat.

c) Weight of proletariat in the country--of capital in foreign stock exchanges.

d) Weak intermediate strata.

e) Proletariat without conservative traditions--able to accept revolutionary doctrines.

18. Decay of the monarchy--bourgeoisie afraid of revolution.

19. The bourgeois liberals and the war.

a) Why against revolution and "internal market" (American style).

b) For imperialist expansion.

20. The intervention of the masses.

a) The bourgeoisie did not make the revolution.

b) The masses made it. Page 134 [of HRR, vol. 1].

21. The formal power of the bourgeoisie --the SRs and Mensheviks thought that was natural.

22. The dual power--the Soviets.

23. The Bolsheviks before Lenin's arrival [in Russia].

a) They did not think of taking power.

b) Pages 285, 287, 291 [of HRR].

24. Lenin's arrival and rearming of party:

"Only from that moment does the Bolshevik Party begin to speak out loud, and, what is more important, with its own voice." Page 285, HRR.

"The next day Lenin presented to the party a short written exposition of his views, which under the name of Theses of April 4 has become one of the most important documents of the revolution. The theses expressed simple thoughts in simple words comprehensible to all: The republic which has issued from the February revolution is not our republic, and the war which it is now waging is not our war. The task of the Bolsheviks is to overthrow the imperialist government. But this government rests upon the support of the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who in turn are supported by the trustfulness of the masses of the people. We are in the minority. In these circumstances there can be no talk of violence from our side. We must teach the masses not to trust the Compromisers and defensists. 'We must patiently explain.' The success of this policy, dictated by the whole existing situation, is assured, and it will bring us to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and so beyond the boundaries of the bourgeois regime....

"These theses of Lenin were published in his own name and his only. The central institutions of the party met them with a hostility softened only by bewilderment. Nobody [in the party] -- not one organization, group or individual -- affixed his signature to them. Even Zinoviev, arriving with Lenin from abroad, where for ten years his ideas had been forming under the immediate and daily influence of Lenin, silently stepped aside." Page 300, HRR.

25. Growth of Bolshevism.

26. Hounding of Bolsheviks ("German agents").

27. Heading into July Days and Kornilov revolt.

28. The critics of the History:

a) The Times--Simeon Strunsky[4]

An apology for the bourgeois liberals -- not satisfied with Trotsky.

Quote: "The leaders of the democratic revolution of March, 1917, by the test of events were inadequate to the need of the hour....But it is one thing to say that the Russian democrats of 1917 were the pathetic Girondins of the Russian revolution, too feeble for the task with

which fate presented them. It is another to speak of them as fools and poltroons, and to deny them credit for the pioneer work, difficult and not free from danger, which they accomplished. The piquant interest and value of the present volume, as already said, are that Trotsky's poisonous epithets and phrases about them are negatived by the detailed story. They clearly emerge from his pages as men, with many failings no doubt, who challenged an ancient tyranny and overthrew it."

The trouble with these leaders was this: their futility mirrored the weakness of their class and their late arrival on historic stage--compare French.

b) Herald Tribune--Louis Fischer[5]

Quote: "Trotsky harks back in the volume under review as well as in other writings to March 1917, when Stalin and Kamenev were moderates and advocated a compromise with the non-Bolsheviks--a cardinal sin for a Communist. Lenin flayed them mercilessly on his arrival from Switzerland in April. Trotsky makes much of this. Yet only a few weeks later, Lenin too became moderate and was saying that the Bolsheviks must 'patiently explain' to the masses instead of precipitating revolution. Even as late as June 1917 when the masses were moving quickly towards the Red camp, Lenin, in Trotsky's words, 'stood firm on his April position: "Patiently explain."' Trotsky approves because it was Lenin. But when Stalin took the same stand months before he attacks him violently and repeatedly. I do not see why he harps on this matter."

How Stalin and Kamenev "explained" and what Lenin explained -- quite a difference.

c) The Nation -- Freeman, one of those literary courtiers of the state power.[6]

The Stalinists decline to review the History--they sent out a scout. Freeman's dilemma: one can imagine the trepidation of this literary squirt: "What shall I say?" "Follow the party line." Let's see the result:

"...the author often mistakes a brilliant aphorism for a historic law, literary satire for scientific explanation, and ironic caricature for psychologic analysis....

"The first phase of the struggle for power from February to July, 1917, is

described by Trotsky in a colorful style. But in a history such as this, style is of minor importance, and must not obscure fundamental issues. It is necessary to distinguish between the brilliant rhetoric of the book and its ideas, and the ideas themselves must be divided into two groups--those which express class presuppositions and those which reflect the author's political bias. Only if proper weight is given to the last factor is it possible to understand how one can write a 'Marxian' history in which personal satire takes precedence over economic factors, and in which all leading revolutionary figures appear as short-sighted, stupid, and timid, with the exception of Trotsky, the nameless heroes of the revolution, and--of necessity--Lenin.... [Trotsky's]

political bias betrays him into savage caricatures of the Bolshevik leaders who have led the Russian masses through a victorious revolution and the achievements of the Five-Year Plan....

"[Trotsky] fails to mention that for twelve years Lenin and the Bolshevik Party educated the workers by an unremitting struggle against Trotsky's political views....Bolshevism, which led the February insurrection, developed its program and tactics in political and ideological combat with Trotskyism and other anti-Bolshevik tendencies."

He never thought of asking: How did it happen that Stalin, Kamenev, etc., were all wrong and that Trotsky stood with Lenin?

#### Footnotes

1. Morris Hillquit (1869-1933) -- reformist leader of the American Socialist Party in 1932.

2. Sidney Hook (1902- ) -- professor of philosophy, then in a radical phase; he supported the American Communist Party's presidential ticket in 1932.

3. This refers to Trotsky's writings before the Russian revolution of 1917.

4. "History from Trotsky's Pen" by Simeon Strunsky (1879-1948) was published in the New York Times Book Review, Feb. 28, 1932. Strunsky, then a columnist for the Times, called himself a socialist when he was young and a Tory in later years. His main criticism of Trotsky's book was that it was unfair to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois opponents of Russian tsarism, who he thought deserved the credit for overthrowing the Romanov monarchy in 1917.

5. "Delivering a Revolution" by Louis Fischer (1896-1970) was published in the New York Herald Tribune Books, Feb. 28, 1932. Fischer was The Nation's correspondent in the USSR in 1932. Trotsky considered him an apologist for Stalinism before the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939; after the pact he became a pacifist. Fischer's review praised the History on several accounts but managed to introduce Stalinist-type innuendos.

When Trotsky wrote that the Russian workers could not have come to power in 1917 if the liberal bourgeois government had solved the peasant problem, Fischer termed this an "important admission" because "Here at least Trotsky does not underestimate the role of the peasantry" (a persistent Stalinist charge). But Fischer's crudest distortion was the one Cannon quotes from. Stalin and Kamenev gave political support to the bourgeois government in March 1917, while Lenin called in April for a political struggle to overthrow that bourgeois government as soon as possible. To equate these two contradictory policies merely because Lenin recognized that an immediate insurrection was not feasible was not even good sophistry. Later in 1932 Fischer published an expanded criticism ("Trotsky's World Revolution," Current History, September 1932). Trotsky answered through an interview by B.J. Field ("Leninism and Stalinism") in Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932).

6. "History and Revolution" by Joseph Freeman (1897-1965) was published in The Nation, March 16, 1932. Freeman was a radical journalist and a founding editor of the New Masses in 1926. He was read out of the Stalinist movement after publishing his autobiography in 1936.

## WE DON'T HAVE TO REINVENT THE WHEEL

by Adam Shils

Leon Trotsky and the Organizational Principles of the Revolutionary Party, by Dianne Feeley, Paul Le Blanc, and Tom Twiss. Published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, New York, 90 pages, \$5.00.

There is a clear relationship between the overall political situation and the attraction and appeal of revolutionary ideas. The fading of the international revolutionary hopes of the late 1960s and early 70s, the series of defeats that the American labor movement has suffered, and the political and organizational degeneration of the groups and sects that strove to be Leninist, have all had a distinct result: only a very small minority of the radical movement sees building a Leninist organization as a task that we should today concentrate our attention and energies on.

There are many different arguments raised as to why democratic Leninism is either impossible or premature; examples of this attitude are obvious to any left activist. Thousands of ex-members of Maoist organizations now reject their past--and work in the Democratic Party. Hundreds of ex-SWP members feel that if today's SWP really represents Leninism, then they want nothing to do with it. Many trade union militants watched the sects of the last decade pass in and out of their unions and see no value in this self-proclaimed "Leninist" activity. Even some revolutionaries believe that a revolutionary party can only be built in a period of the "actuality" of the revolution, something clearly some distance off.

There is a flip side to this coin. Those activists who see themselves as Leninists have different ideas about what their organizational goal is. Many see the miserable police "parties" of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as Leninist.

Socialist Workers Party leaders have said that our traditional organizational functioning, developed by Cannon, is no longer adequate in a period which they see as one of an impending U.S. invasion of Central America and greatly increased domestic class struggle. Today, they say, we need more concern with

security and tight "revolutionary centralism." This "theory," of course, provides the central leadership team with a convenient cover in their campaign to block any real debate inside the SWP.

This entire morass of confusion has led to a discussion on the left. Is bureaucratization inevitable in small revolutionary organizations? Does the plan of building a separate revolutionary organization automatically cut one off from involvement in mass struggles? Does Leninism lead to Stalinism? How can one build a Marxist organization in a period of overall social stability? These are all legitimate and real questions.

For our part, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency gives an unequivocal answer to these problems. We totally support the idea of a democratic centralist Leninist party and believe that "work for the establishment of a fighting organization must be carried on under all circumstances, no matter how 'drab and peaceful' the times may be, and no matter how low the 'depression of revolutionary spirit' has sunk. More than that, it is precisely in such conditions and in such periods that this work is particularly required: for it would be too late to start building such an organization in the midst of uprisings and outbreaks. The organization must be ready when the moment arrives." (Lenin, quoted in Cannon, The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31, Monad, New York, 1981, pp. 334-35.) Overthrowing American capitalism, with its incredible material apparatus and political sophistication, is the most complex task ever placed before the international working class. Only the most conscious and disciplined leadership can possibly hope to steer through the by-ways that the class struggle will produce. There is no alternative to a revolutionary party as a way of carrying out this task. We have no reason to believe that such a party will emerge spontaneously or automatically.

The first step is to establish what a revolutionary organization really is. This is the overall importance of the newly published book by Dianne Feeley, Paul Le Blanc and Tom Twiss, all com-

rades of Socialist Action. The authors explain Trotsky's views of building a revolutionary party and the problems that are involved in that struggle.

This short book draws heavily on quotations from Trotsky. However, it is far more than just a stringing together of quotes. Its aim is to explain, in Trotsky's own words, so that there can be no misunderstanding, the real unfolding and development of his mature views on problems of socialist organization. The book is structured into three main sections: "The Revolutionary Party: Its Function and Consequent Norms," which explains Trotsky's thinking on the reasons why a revolutionary party is needed; "The Challenge of the Left Opposition," which describes Trotsky's fight against the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Communist Party and his views on how a democratic party should function. The final section is called "Toward the World Party of Socialist Revolution," which takes up Trotsky's political battle to establish the Fourth International. This is the longest section of the book, and also describes the myriad problems that the small Trotskyist organizations faced in the 1930s.

The authors clearly sympathize with the central tenets of Trotsky's viewpoint that they outline in the book. This viewpoint can be briefly summarized: spontaneous social struggles provide the basis for revolutionary activity. These struggles, however, need a conscious and clear direction if they are going to succeed against a centralized and adept opponent. This direction should come from a socialist organization, which should develop an overall world outlook that no single experience could lead to. The different experiences of members of the organization should be synthesized through a democratic discussion which fuses them with the lessons of past class battles. Unifying different struggles and experiences provides the basis for coordinated and centralized intervention into the class struggle.

Any organization that aspires to these goals requires a stable structure, a flexible and patient leadership, a real feel for the mood of the working class, and a long-term orientation towards involvement in the daily struggles of the working class and its allies. These ideas form the heart of this useful and relevant book. Incidentally, Leon Trotsky and the Organizational Principles of the Revolutionary Party is much more readable and accessible than

one would assume a book about organizing small left groups forty years ago would be! All the quotations are integrated into a clear overall historical context.

The book has an interesting history. It was written in 1982 when the authors were all members of the Pittsburgh branch of the SWP. It was submitted to the SWP leadership for publication as part of the "Education for Socialists" bulletin series, which had often published material of this type before. The writers never received a response to their proposal. This is not surprising, given that the book's emphasis on internal democracy and open debate is in stark contrast to the way in which the SWP leadership attempts to run the party at the moment. Until its publication by the F.I.T., this long essay has had only a very limited circulation as a xeroxed manuscript.

Why is this review called "We Don't Have To Reinvent the Wheel"? Today, as was described at the beginning of the article, many ex-SWP members and radical activists discuss the whole problem of revolutionary organization starting from scratch. Every problem is seen as something new, which we do not yet have the answer to. The caricatures of Leninism are rightly rejected, but the question remains open as to what can fill their place. For us, a large part of the answer already exists: the historic program of the SWP and the program and activity of the Fourth International today provide a framework for taking up today's problems. Feeley, Le Blanc and Twiss show that Trotsky's views on organization provide a solid starting point for overcoming our difficulties.

This does not mean for one second that we have a "manual" or textbook that provides ready-made solutions to all problems. That would fly in the face of the flexible and creative method of both Trotsky and the book's writers. Similarly, no sensible person would claim that because the basic categories of Marxist political economy have already been discovered, we therefore have no obligation to make a detailed study of the exact state of world and U.S. capitalism. There is no substitution for the intelligent application in current conditions of our general ideas.

Leon Trotsky and the Organizational Principles of the Revolutionary Party provides us with a powerful weapon for our ideological struggle in defense of Leninism.

Reviewed by Adam Shils

## The SWP National Committee Was Also Purged

Editor--

The SWP's 32nd convention in August not only approved the expulsions and forced resignations of many members since the 31st convention in 1981, it also decided to drastically reduce the size of the NC. This was then used to rid the NC of a high proportion of NC members who had been elected in 1981 with the leadership's approval, with whom the leadership is now dissatisfied or disappointed.

Reporting on this purge is complicated by the fact that right after the convention the SWP Political Committee decided to stop using the full names of NC members in minutes and internal documents, and lists them now only by their first names. The rationale offered for this policy is not that it "prevents the bosses and their political police from knowing who are members of the SWP" but that it will make it harder for them to prove who are members. This policy reflects an increasing political paranoia on the part of the leadership--which is insulating the party and closing it in on itself. But without further comment on this now, I note that I am not using any names--last or first--in what follows.

My summary is based on elections to the NC reported in the SWP's Internal Information Bulletin, No. 1, October 1981, where full names were given, and in its Information Bulletin, No. 5, September 1984, where only first names were given.

At the 1981 convention the delegates elected 46 regular members of the NC plus 37 alternates--a total of 83. After the size was changed at the 1984 convention the delegates elected 29 regular members plus 21 alternates--a total of 50.

Regular members: Of the 46 elected in 1981, 24 were reelected regular mem-

bers in 1984; another 8 were elected alternates in 1984. Thus 32 of the 46 remained NC members--around 70 percent. The other 14 who had been elected regulars in 1981 were not elected to any NC post in 1984--around 30 percent.

Of these 14, three had been expelled for political differences between the two conventions. The other 11 were fervent supporters of the leadership's policies both in 1981 and 1984--at any rate they said or wrote nothing critical of the leadership in 1984. Among this 11 were several well-known figures: A presidential candidate and antiwar leader in the late 1960s. A vice-presidential candidate in the mid 70s. A vice-presidential candidate in the early 80s. The former organizer of the SWP's biggest branch, who had given one of the major reports at the 1981 convention. Several former national officers of the YSA. And so on.

Alternate members: Of the 37 elected in 1981, 12 were reelected alternate members in 1984; another 5 were elected regular NC members this time. Thus 17 of 37 remained NC members--around 46 percent. The other 20 elected alternates in 1981 were not elected to any NC posts in 1984--around 54 percent.

Of these 20, one was expelled for political differences, one resigned from the SWP after becoming inactive, a third resigned under political pressure. The other 17 included former YSA national officers, party editors, trade unionists, etc.

Combining the above two categories in the NC (regulars and alternates), a total of 83 NC members were elected in 1981. Of these, 49 were elected either regular or alternate members in 1984--around 60 percent--while a total of 34 were taken off the NC altogether--around 40 percent.

A former NC member



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