

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

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

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FIRST TIME IN PRINT!

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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].

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

by James P. Cannon

[NOTE--The following talk was given in Los Angeles on Sept. 6, 1966, by James P. Cannon (1890-1974), national chairman emeritus of the SWP at that time. He later referred to it as one of "my last speeches before I fell into retirement, so to speak." As a founder of the SWP and the Fourth International he had been invited to speak about the reasons the revolutionary movement was able to survive the hard times of its early years. But he did not confine himself to the early years and spoke about the current phase (the 1960s) as well. In fact, several of the themes he discussed are strikingly relevant to the problems facing the movement 18 years later, on the eve of a World Congress of the Fourth International where the principles and methods Cannon advocated are under severe attack from the leaders of his own party.

Internationalism, Cannon stressed, means international collaboration above all. He felt that some younger members of the SWP might not have fully assimilated that idea. For their benefit he spelled out some of the SWP's duties -- to concern itself with the affairs, the difficulties, the disputes of every party in the Fourth International; to participate in all the discussions that arise throughout the FI; to welcome opinions about the SWP's problems by the International and its parties.

We survived, Cannon said, not only because of our international ties, commitments, and collaboration, but also because we were revolutionary continuators; because we sought to clarify questions and did not hesitate to polemicize against false answers; because we had an orientation to the working class; because we tried to put our theories into action; because we had and nourished the capacity to learn; and because we tried to settle differences of opinion among ourselves through party democracy and free discussion (never by the suppression of differences). While Cannon was well aware of the dangers of permanent factionalism, he did not shrink from pointing out that factional struggle becomes necessary when a leadership adopts incorrect or harmful policies and tries to deny the members a chance to protest against such policies.

This is, therefore, a talk that touches on many of the points disputed inside the SWP in its current crisis as well as on issues that will be discussed at the World Congress of the FI early in 1985. This speech has never been printed before. It was transcribed and edited by Evelyn Sell from a taped recording. She is also responsible for the sub-titles and for rearranging the sequence of some sentences.]

The party that we represent here had its origin 38 years ago next month when I and Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, all members of the National Committee of the Communist Party, were expelled because we insisted upon supporting Trotsky and the Russian Opposition in the international discussion. It seems remarkable, in view of the death rate of organizations that we have noted

over the years, that this party still shows signs of youth. That is the hallmark of a living movement: its capacity to attract the young. Many attempts at creating different kinds of radical organizations have foundered, withered away, over that problem. The old-timers stuck around but new blood didn't come in. The organizations, one by one, either died or just withered away on the

vine (which is probably a worst fate than death).

In my opinion, there are certain reasons for the survival of our movement and for the indications of a new surge of vitality in it. I'll enumerate some of the more important reasons which account for this.

INTERNATIONALISM AND THE SWP

First of all, and above all, we recognized 38 years ago that in the modern world it is impossible to organize a revolutionary party in one country. All the problems of the different nations of the world are so intertwined today that they cannot be solved with a national policy alone. The latest to experience the truth of that dictum is Lyndon B. Johnson. He's trying to solve the problems of American foreign policy with Texas-style arm-twisting politics. It does not work. We decided we would be internationalists first, last, and all the time, and that we would not try to build a purely American party with American ideas -- because American ideas are very scarce in the realm of creative politics. By becoming part of an international movement, and thereby participating in international collaboration, and getting the benefit of the ideas and experiences of others in other countries -- as well as contributing our ideas to them -- that we would have a better chance to create a viable revolutionary movement in this country.

I think that holds true today more than ever. A party that is not internationalist is out of date very sadly and is doomed utterly. I don't know if our younger comrades have fully assimilated that basic, fundamental first idea or not. I have the impression at times that they understand it rather perfunctorily, take it for granted, rather than understand it in its essence: that internationalism means, above all, international collaboration. The affairs, the difficulties, the disputes of every party in the Fourth International must be our concern -- as our problems must be their concern. It's not only our right but our duty to participate in all the discussions that arise throughout the International, as well as it is their right and their duty to take part in our discussions and disputes.

OUR REVOLUTIONARY CONTINUITY

The second reason that I would give for the durability of this party of ours is the fact that we did not pretend to

have a new revelation. We were not these "men from nowhere" whom you see running around the campuses and other places today saying, "We've got to start from scratch. Everything that happened in the past is out the window." On the contrary, we solemnly based ourselves on the continuity of the revolutionary movement. On being expelled from the Communist Party, we did not become anti-communist. On the contrary, we said we are the true representatives of the best traditions of the Communist Party. If you read current literature, you'll see that we are the only ones who defend the first ten years of American communism. The official leaders of the Communist Party don't want to talk about it at all. Yet those were ten rich and fruitful years which we had behind us when we started the Trotskyist movement in this country. Before that, some of us had about ten years of experience in the IWW and the Socialist Party, and in various class struggle activities around the country. We said that we were the heirs of the IWW and the Socialist Party -- all that was good and valid and revolutionary in them. We honor the Knights of Labor and the Haymarket martyrs. We're not Johnny-come-latelys at all. We're continuators.

We even go back further than that. We go back to the "Communist Manifesto" of 1848, and to Marx and Engels, the authors of that document, and their other writings. We go back to the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. We go back to Lenin and Trotsky, and to the struggle of the Left Opposition in the Russian Soviet party and in the Comintern.

We said, "We are the continuators." And we really were. We were in dead earnest about it and we were very active from the very beginning. This is one of the marks of a group, however small, that has confidence in itself. We engaged in polemics against all other pretenders to leadership of the American working class: first of all the Stalinists, and the reformist Social Democrats, and the labor skates, and anybody else who had some quack medicine to cure the troubles of working people. Polemics are the mark of a revolutionary party. A party that is "too nice" to engage in what some call "bickering," "criticizing," is too damn nice to live very long in the whirlpool of politics.

Politics is even worse than baseball, in that respect. Leo Durocher, who had a bad reputation but who carried the New York Giants to a championship of the National League and then to the world

championship over the Cleveland Indians, explained this fact in the title of an article he wrote, "Nice Guys Finish Last." That's true in politics as well as in baseball.

If we disagree with other people, we have to say so! We have to make it clear why we disagree so that inquiring young people, looking for an organization to represent their aspirations and ideals, will know the difference between one party and another. Nothing is worse than muddying up differences when they concern fundamental questions.

WORKING CLASS ORIENTATION

Another reason for the survival of our movement through the early hard period was our orientation. Being Marxists, our orientation was always toward the working class and to the working class organizations. It never entered our minds in those days to think you could overthrow capitalism over the head of the working class. Marxism had taught us that the great service capitalism has rendered to humanity has been to increase the productivity of society and, at the same time, to create a working class which would have the interest and the power to overthrow capitalism. In creating this million-headed wage-working class, Marx said: capitalism has created its own gravediggers. We saw it as the task of revolutionists to orient our activity, our agitation, and our propaganda to the working class of this country.

PUTTING THEORY INTO ACTION

Another reason for our exceptional durability was that we did not merely study the books and learn the formulas. Many people have done that -- and that's all they've done, and they might as well have stayed home. Trotsky remarked more than once, in the early days, about some people who play with ideas in our international movement. He said: they have understood all the formulas and they can repeat them by rote, but they haven't got them in their flesh and blood, so it doesn't count. When you get the formulas of Marxism in your flesh and blood that means you have an irresistible impulse and drive to put the theory into action.

As Engels said to the sectarian socialists in the United States in the nineteenth century: our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action. One who studies the theory of Marxism and doesn't do anything to try to put it into action among the working class

might as well have stayed in bed. We were not that type. We came out of the experiences of the past, but we were activists as well as students of Marxism.

THE CAPACITY TO LEARN

One more reason for our survival: one factor working in our favor was our modesty. Modesty is the precondition for learning. If you know it all to start with, you can't learn any more. We were brought to the painful realization in 1928 that there were a lot of things we didn't know -- after all of our experiences and study. New problems and new complications which had arisen in the Soviet Union and in the international movement required that we go to school again. And to go to school with the best teachers: the leaders of the Russian Revolution. After twenty years of experience in the American movement and in the Comintern, we put ourselves to school and tried to learn from the great leaders who had made the only successful revolution in the history of the working class.

We had to learn, also, how to think -- and to take time to think. We believed in a party of disciplined action but disciplined activity alone does not characterize only the revolutionist. Other groups, such as the fascists, have that quality. The Stalinists have disciplined action. Disciplined action directed by clear thinking distinguishes the revolutionary Marxist party. Thinking is a form of action -- although it isn't always recognized as such. Discussion is a form of action. In the early days of our movement we had a great deal of discussion -- not all of it pleasant to hear, but out of which came some clarification. We had to learn to be patient and listen and, out of the discussion, to formulate our policy and our program.

Those were the qualities of our movement in the first years of our almost total isolation that enabled us to survive. We had confidence in the American working class and we oriented toward it. When the American working class began to move in the mid-thirties, we had formulated our program of action, and we were in the midst of the class, and we began to grow -- in some years, we grew rather rapidly.

INTERNAL DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE SWP

Not the least of our reasons for remaining alive for 38 years, and growing a little, and now being in a posi-

tion to capitalize on new opportunities, was the flexible democracy of our party. We never tried to settle differences of opinion by suppression. Free discussion -- not every day in the week but at stated regular times, with full guarantees for the minority -- is a necessary condition for the health and strength of an organization such as ours.

There's no guarantee that factionalism won't get out of hand. I don't want to be an advocate of factionalism -- unless anybody picks on me and runs the party the wrong way and doesn't want to give me a chance to protest about it! The general experience of the international movement has shown that excesses of factionalism can be very dangerous and destructive to a party. In my book, The First Ten Years of American Communism, I put all the necessary emphasis on the negative side of the factional struggles which became unprincipled. But on the other hand, if a party can live year after year without any factional disturbances, it may not be a sign of health -- it may be a sign that the party's asleep; that it's not a real live party. In a live party, you have differences, differences of appraisal, and so on. But that's a sign of life.

THE NEW LEFT OF THE 1960s

You have now a new phenomenon in the American radical movement which I hear is called "The New Left." This is a broad title given to an assemblage of people who state they don't like the situation the way it is and something ought to be done about it -- but we mustn't take anything from the experiences of the past; nothing from the "Old Left" or any of its ideas or traditions are any good. What's the future going to be? "Well, that's not so clear either. Let's think about that." What do you do now? "I don't know. Something ought to be done." That's a fair description of this amorphous New Left which is written about so much and with which we have to contend.

We know where we come from. We intend to maintain our continuity. We know that we are part of the world, and that we have to belong to an international movement and get the benefits of association and discussion with co-thinkers throughout the world. We have a definite orientation whereas the New Left says the working class is dead. The working class was crossed off by the wiseacres in the twenties. There was a long boom in the 1920s. The workers not only didn't gain any victories, they

lost ground. The trade unions actually declined in number. In all the basic industries, where you now see great flourishing industrial unions -- the auto workers, aircraft, steel, rubber, electrical, transportation, maritime -- the unions did not exist, just a scattering here and there. There were company unions in all these big basic industries, run by the bosses' stooges. The workers were entitled to belong to these company unions as long as they did what the stooges told them to do. It took a semi-revolutionary uprising in the mid-thirties to break that up and install real unions.

There were a lot of wiseacres who crossed off the American working class and said, "That's Marx's fundamental mistake. He thinks the working class can make a revolution and emancipate itself. And he's dead wrong! Just look at them!" They didn't say who would make the revolution if the workers didn't do it -- just like the New Leftists today don't give us any precise description of what power will transform society.

People who said such things in the 1920s were proved to be wrong, and those who say the same things about the working class today will be proved to be wrong. We will maintain our orientation toward the working class and to its organized section in particular. I hope that our party and our youth movement will not only continue but will intensify and develop its capacity for polemics against all pretenders to leadership of the coming radicalization of the American workers.

Above all, I hope our party and our youth movement will continue to learn and to grow. That's the condition for survival as a revolutionary party. I don't merely get impatient with Johnny-come-latelys who just arrived from nowhere and announce that they know it all, I get impatient even with old-timers who think they have nothing more to learn. The world is changing. New problems arise, new complexities, new complications confront the revolutionary movement at every step. The condition for effective political leadership is that the leaders themselves continue to learn and to grow. That means: not to lose their modesty altogether.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

I'd like to add one more point. The question is raised very often, "What can one person do?" The urgency of the situation in the world is pretty widely recognized outside of our ranks. The

urgency of the whole social problem has been magnified a million times by the development of nuclear weapons, and by the capacity of these inventions and discoveries to destroy all life on earth. Not merely a single city like Hiroshima or Nagasaki, but capable of destroying all life on earth. And it's in the hands of reckless and irresponsible people. It's got to be taken away from them, and it cannot be done otherwise except by revolution.

What can one single person do in this terribly urgent situation? I heard a program on television a short while ago: an interview with Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher, former pacifist, fighter against nuclear war. He's not a revolutionary Marxist but is an absolutely dedicated opponent of nuclear war and a prophet of the calami-

ty such a war will bring. He was asked, "What are the chances, in your opinion, of preventing a nuclear war that might destroy all life on earth?" He said, "The odds are four-to-six against us." He was then asked, "How would you raise the odds of being able to prevent a nuclear war?" He answered, "I don't know anything to do except keep on fighting to try to change the odds."

Now suppose as a result of all the protests and the activity of ourselves and other people, we change the odds to fifty-fifty. Then you have a scale, evenly balanced, where just a feather can tip it one way or another. If a situation such as that exists -- which, in my opinion, is just about the state of affairs in the world today -- one person's activity in the revolutionary movement might make the difference.

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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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LARRY STEWART - PROLETARIAN FIGHTER FOR 45 YEARS

by the Editorial Board

Larry Stewart, of Newark, N.J., and a member of the editorial board of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, died of cancer on Nov. 16 at the Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital in New York. He was 63 years old, and had been actively engaged in building the revolutionary Marxist, labor, and Black movements since he was 18.

His death marks a real loss for those movements. His sober judgment and advice, his rich experience under all kinds of conditions, and his militant example will be sadly missed at a time when the workers and their allies need leadership more than ever before.

Larry Stewart was born to a poor Black working class family in Milford, Conn., and spent part of his youth in foster and orphan homes. His formal education had to stop at high school for economic reasons. In 1939 he joined the Socialist Workers Party in New Haven, after which he moved to Newark because it was easier to find a factory job there. He remained in Newark for the rest of his life except during World War II, when he became a merchant seaman before being drafted into the army.

Among the jobs he held in the following years were steel worker, laborer, electrical worker, and truck driver. He belonged at different times to both CIO, AFL, and independent unions, including the United Steelworkers, United Electrical Workers, and Teamsters. He also experienced plenty of unemployment when the economy turned down after the war, and was on strike several times.

In 1941 he was a leading activist in the Newark contingent of the March on Washington Movement, an all-Black group that fought against racism in industry and the armed forces. After the war he was active in the NAACP and local committees against police brutality, and he defended the Black community against repression during the so-called Newark "riot" of 1967. He also tried to help build the National Black Independent Political Party in New Jersey when it was organized in 1981.

Although Stewart was not a national leader of the SWP, his party had high esteem for his many contributions to party-building. It valued his best proletarian traits -- his steadfastness, his personification of the party's revo-

lutionary continuity, his modesty, and his sense of proportion.

He served several times on the executive committee of the Newark branch, and as its delegate to national conventions. He ran for Congress and other local posts on the SWP ticket in New Jersey, represented the party in other campaigns, and, when no one else would do it, wrote articles he thought were needed in the party press.

In 1976 the delegates to the SWP's national convention elected him to the four-member Control Commission, which investigates charges of violations of party discipline. At that time the tradition still existed that only the most responsible, fair, and independent-minded members in the party should be put on the Control Commission. He was reelected to this post at the 1977 convention, and served on it for another two years. He did this job as he did everything else -- with concern for the interests of both his party and his comrades, including those who had made mistakes.

Stewart was an enthusiastic supporter of the party's decision in 1978 to send most of its members into industry, but he became troubled by the mechanical and schematic way in which it was implemented. By the time of the 1981 convention he felt that the party leadership was going off-course in its attitudes to the Castroist current in Cuba. He later found himself in sympathy with the positions taken by the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the National Committee.

Shortly after retiring from his job with a physical disability he suffered a heart attack in 1983. He was on a leave of absence from the Newark branch but that didn't save him from the axe of the political purge in January 1984, when he was expelled, without a trial he could attend, on fraudulent charges that he was a "splitter" and "secret factionalist."

Stewart then helped to organize the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and became a member of the editorial board of its journal, the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism. Issue Number 5 (April 1984) printed his appeal to the SWP against his expulsion; Number 7 (May) contained his analysis of the National Black Independent Political Party; Number 8 (June)

had his "Open Letter to Mel Mason" indignantly protesting his exclusion from a public SWP campaign rally.

We send condolences to Vera Stewart, his wife, and Paul, his son. We will never forget him and the cause to which he devoted most of his life. His example is a source of strength to us who knew him personally. We commend it to others who share his revolutionary proletarian goals.

* * *

Before he was hospitalized, Larry Stewart wrote the first draft of an appeal to the coming World Congress of the Fourth International (see below). He also was working on an article tentatively entitled "Permanent Revolution and Blacks in the U.S." If enough of this was completed to merit publication, we will print it in this Bulletin in the near future.

LARRY STEWART'S APPEAL TO THE WORLD CONGRESS

Newark, N.J., U.S.A.
November 7, 1984

To the 1985 World Congress
of the Fourth International

Comrades:

In 1939 I joined the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party simultaneously (at that time, before the Voorhis Act prohibited such affiliations, the SWP was a section of the FI). The FI was then a few months old, the SWP a little over a year old. So I have been a Fourth Internationalist for over 45 years -- in good times and bad, in wartime and in peacetime. Similarly, I was a loyal and disciplined member of the SWP for more than 44 years -- until I was condemned as a "secret factionalist" and "splitter" last January and was expelled without a chance to confront my accusers at a trial.

But my appeal to you -- to reject my expulsion and to help me and others expelled to be reinstated in the SWP -- is not based on the length of my membership or "seniority." It is based, first of all, on the elementary requirements of proletarian justice. I am innocent of all the charges against me (like the other victims of the recent SWP purge). I am the victim of a frame-up. You owe it to me and to all the other members of the International to defend me and to clear my name of the muck that the SWP leadership tried to drown us in. This is not something I ask as a special favor -- I demand it as the right of every honest member of the International.

The second basis for my appeal is that it serves the best interests of the movement as a whole -- the interests of the SWP and the interests of the FI. What both need, in order to strengthen

our movement for its great liberating tasks, is the reunification of all Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. inside the SWP and under the banner of the SWP. But this cannot be achieved as long as some of us bear the stigma of "splitters," "secret factionalists" and participants in "disruption campaigns against the SWP." That is why you have to uphold the appeals of the expelled SWP members as the first step on the road to a solution of the crisis of SWP-FI relations.

I do not make the error of thinking that our appeals are the most important point on the agenda of your Congress. Far more important and decisive is the need for the International to reject the various liquidationist schemes, proposals, and moods that have surfaced since the 1979 Congress; and, within that context, to do everything possible to prevent unwarranted splits. But there is no contradiction between these major tasks and favorable action on our appeals. In fact, they fit together quite harmoniously.

In conclusion, I hope that your Congress will be successful in maintaining and preserving the revolutionary character the FI has always had, and I subscribe to the words of Leon Trotsky in 1938, shortly before I joined: "Long live the Socialist Workers Party of the United States! Long live the Fourth International!"

Comradely,
Larry Stewart

RESULTS AND MEANING OF THE 1984 ELECTION

by Frank Lovell

Radical parties have long been aware of how the two-party system is rigged to create the illusion that there is a fundamental programmatic and ideological difference between the Democrats and Republicans; and that if there isn't such a difference now it can be brought into existence through mass support of one party or the other. Since the time of Eugene V. Debs at the start of the century, socialists have entered the electoral arena to expose the trickery of capitalist politicians and explain the strategy and goals of the socialist movement.

This year radicals were drawn into the electoral stratagems of the two-party system as never before. The Guardian, the radical weekly which has endorsed socialist or third party candidates in recent years, this time endorsed the Democratic candidate Mondale.

Of the three parties claiming to be socialist or Marxist that got on the ballot in several states, two campaigned for capitalist candidates while running their own independent tickets. The Communist Party campaigned against "Reaganism" and urged the election of Mondale, an accommodation to lesser-evilism typical of the CP since 1936. So its performance this year was nothing new. But the Workers World Party, smaller and less influential than the CP, was lured into the lesser-evil trap through the Jesse Jackson promise to reform the Democratic Party. This was a departure for the WWP, which previously had campaigned against the bourgeois two-party system. Only the Socialist Workers Party ran a straight anti-capitalist, pro-socialist campaign. (See Bulletin No. 13, "Lost Opportunities: The SWP's 1984 Election Campaign.")

Most radicals openly endorsed Mondale because they were afraid of what they think Reagan represents. The election returns showed that the perception of Reagan as a "fascist" is not widely shared, and that the voters did not heed the radicals' warnings.

One reason socialists enter elections is to test the stage of working class radicalization and to gage the level of class consciousness among workers. Election results often do not tell

much about these questions, but this year the radical parties were uninterested in them and failed to conduct campaigns that could provide some answers

WHAT STATISTICS SHOWED

There are 174 million "eligible voters" in this country. (Old enough, they can vote if they register.)

This year 127 million registered. That means 47 million did not register, for whatever reasons.

Of those who registered, 92 million voted. That means 35 million who were registered and could have voted did not. So while 92 million voted, 82 million did not -- a turnout of 52.9 percent.

The capitalist press had predicted a significant increase in voting over 1980, but the increase was tiny -- three-tenths of 1 percent. In 1960, 62.8 percent voted.

A REAGAN MANDATE?

Reagan came in with 59 percent of the votes cast (around 54 million). Mondale got 41 percent (over 37 million). How does that compare with 1980?

Reagan got 51 percent of the total votes in 1980. Carter got 41 percent then, the same as Mondale this time. So Reagan gained 8 percent (around 7 million more votes). But in 1980 Republican John Anderson ran an independent ticket and polled 7 percent of the vote. He did not run this year.

This doesn't mean Reagan this time got all the votes that went to Anderson in 1980. Anderson endorsed and campaigned for Mondale in 1984. Some who voted for Anderson in 1980 voted for Mondale this time. Some who had supported Carter in 1980 backed Reagan this year. And some who voted in 1980 did not vote this time.

So the shift to Reagan in 1984 was around 8 percent. This is not very high in relation to the electorate over which a Reagan administration must govern. Reagan got less than one-third of the eligible voters (slightly over 30 percent). Is "landslide" really an apt term for a candidate unable to get the votes

deal from the electoral process, thus improving its "art of government." Elections aren't exclusively circuses to entertain and deceive the masses -- they also serve other useful purposes. In 1984 the ruling class became aware of two disturbing facts: 1) despite their efforts, almost half the eligible voters stayed away from the polls; 2) Reagan, "the great communicator," was not able to get his message through to more than 30 percent of the eligible voters.

The low turnout is of concern to the ruling class. They know how many millions of potential voters there are, but they don't know what they are thinking or may do. If they can bring these voters into the electoral process, they have a better chance of bringing them under control, they think.

This is the reason for all sorts of opinion surveys to find out what people are thinking, how they will vote, or if they will vote. In this respect the remark of a Black unemployed auto worker in Detroit was probably representative of a wide layer of workers, Black and white, out of work and on the job. That is why the capitalist press paid attention to what he said.

His name is James Spivey, age 36. "I haven't worked since Reagan's been in office, but I was laid off under Carter," he said. "Since then my view has been Presidents come and Presidents go. I'll vote for Mondale, but I don't see much reason to."

James Spivey may have been one of the 35 million registered voters who didn't bother to go to the polls. (These 35 million almost equal the 37 million cast for Mondale.) Spivey's comment less than a week before the election is certainly typical of how several million registered voters felt at that time.

WORKING CLASS RADICALIZATION

Surveys of voting habits and shifting voting patterns influence the voters and inform capitalist strategists, but anyone interested in the governmental structure of this society and seeking ways to change society will do well to pay attention to these available data. Containing useful facts, they ought to be of special interest to the radical and union movements.

What can we learn about the present stage of working class radicalization? Perhaps some tentative conclusions can be deduced from the fact that 6 percent of Mondale voters identified "policy toward Central America" as a major voting issue. That's over two million voters, most of whom probably considered

this the most important issue. We do not know the class composition of this group.

Opposition to Reagan's jingoism is a sign of the present stage of radicalization, but not the only one. The 1984 election did not measure the extent of antiwar sentiment, nor did it tell us much about the present stage of working class radicalization.

The fact that almost half of all eligible voters did not vote says nothing about the working class radicalization. For most of this century a high percentage of eligible voters did not vote or were excluded. This has continued through times of relative quiescence and periods of radicalization.

Similarly unrevealing about the working class radicalization was the high percentage of young voters (18 to 24 years old) who voted for Reagan and call themselves "conservative." Youth are volatile, and their voting pattern this year may express that fact. Their preferences and moods can swing sharply from one seeming extreme to another. Very few of them are committed conservatives in their political outlook. They can easily and quickly become disillusioned with the poorly perceived promises made about their economic future. As the cycle swings down, most of these "young conservatives" will trade in their conservatism for the new radicalism.

The same is true of the "racism in terms of domestic issues and foreign policy" that many disappointed radicals read into the fact that a majority of white workers voted for Reagan, while 90 percent of Blacks voted for Mondale. We didn't need this election to inform us that this is a racist society and that racial prejudice is common among workers as well as others. But there is nothing in the election returns to indicate a recent increase in racism among the workers. The surveys show that most workers who voted for Reagan were motivated more by their hopes for economic improvement than anything else.

None of this has much to do with the present radicalization of the working class, which is an entirely different matter. The workers today are questioning many of the values of this society that they had accepted during the previous quarter-century of relative economic stability. That stability no longer exists. The current insecurity and uncertainty are shattering the illusions and hopes of millions of working class families. But there was no way of adequately expressing their anxiety and frustration in this election.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

On the other hand, the elections do tell us something about the class consciousness of working people (which is a different matter than radicalization). They tell us much about the workers' class consciousness, but nothing new. Again we see that the level of class consciousness among workers in this country is not very high.

In the 1930s the workers developed a form of class consciousness that was lacking in the preceding decade. With great class battles that created the CIO, the working class became union conscious. Most workers were convinced, either through their own experience or by what they saw and read, that unions were their organization. They recognized the unions as working class organizations and looked to the unions for solutions to their problems. Not many workers were anti-union, as they had been earlier.

But these union men and women never became politically class conscious in their vast majority. They supported Roosevelt and they voted for the Democratic Party. Their political development was arrested by the treachery of the Social Democrats and the Stalinists who were in the leadership of the union movement before and during World War II.

Since the war the reactionary bureaucracy of the unions has helped to undermine and erode the union consciousness of the class -- so that today we again meet many workers who are anti-union. The present level of class consciousness among workers in this country is lower than in 1936.

The impending economic crisis will change this, just as the consciousness of the workers in the 1930s was changed, providing there are teachers and leaders to explain the meaning of the crisis and give guidance to the class.

STATE OF THE UNIONS

This year's election makes it clear beyond doubt that the union bureaucracy cannot deliver the working class vote, the so-called blue collar vote. It can't even deliver the union vote. If the AFL-CIO poll is accurate, showing that 60 percent of members in unions affiliated to the AFL-CIO voted for Mondale, even that is not enough to convince the office seekers and capitalist politicians that the labor bureaucracy has useful political weight. The bureaucrats cannot deliver the necessary votes. This has been true for a long time, since the

1948 election when the union vote kept Truman in the White House. But it has been a long time since the total powerlessness of the union bureaucrats was exposed as completely as in 1984.

Beginning with Gary Hart's charge in the primaries that Mondale was beholden to "a special interest group," Mondale talked and acted as if he was sorry he had union endorsement. For their part, the union bureaucrats made no plausible campaign for their candidate. They tried to campaign against Reagan, and organized anti-Reagan demonstrations. But they failed to defend the union movement they claim to represent. They failed to strike back effectively against the "special interest" charge that Reagan picked up from Hart.

This was an opportunity for the union officialdom to explain why unions were organized and what they are, describing the class character of the unions, contrasting them with the anti-social self-seeking special interest groups in the capitalist structure. The history of unionism is the struggle against special interest groups, and against the other evils of capitalism. But of course the labor bureaucracy does not understand or believe this, and therefore is incapable of conducting a campaign of this kind (which would have been unacceptable to the Democrats anyway).

QUESTIONS FOR RADICALS

Few radicals could find anything favorable in Mondale. They said they supported him because they feared Reagan and acted as if they thought their support would help elect Mondale. The results show how misplaced this hope was.

In post-election evaluations some radicals contended that even if they didn't do much to elect Mondale, they proved to themselves that it is necessary to stand firmly against reaction, racism, and war. They said they were convinced of this before the election and they hoped to convince Mondale and his party of this during the campaign. But they failed. They ought to ask themselves why.

The single issue that concerned them most was the threat of U.S. military invasion in Nicaragua. But the post-election polls reported that only 2 percent of Reagan voters and 6 percent of Mondale's identified "policy in Central America" as a major voting issue. Those who worked so hard to defeat Reagan's war policy ought to ask themselves why so few voters thought it would make

any difference on this issue if Mondale got elected.

The unsolicited radical support Mondale got certainly did not move him to the left. In fact, once he had the nomination he moved openly to the right, removing previous ambiguities about his real positions. By the time of his second debate with Reagan, it was hard to tell which candidate was more anti-Soviet, more ready to invade Nicaragua. At the end of the campaign the posture of the Democratic Party was further to the right than at the beginning. Why did so many Mondale supporters expect the opposite to happen?

THE DANGER OF ELECTORALISM

The SWP clearly differentiated itself from the fractured radical movement by running a socialist campaign against the evils of capitalism, and specifically against the criminal plans of the Reagan administration to invade Nicaragua. But during the campaign the party discovered something it called the "danger of electoralism," and some SWP candidates tried to raise this as a campaign issue. No one outside the SWP understood what this was and it passed almost completely unnoticed.

This "danger of electoralism" was described in the political resolution adopted at the SWP national convention in August. It refers to bourgeois electoralism, a trap for working class organizations. This is the trap that undermined the CIO movement and the trap most radicals fell into this year. Work-

ers who are beguiled into thinking that their problems can be solved through the bourgeois electoral process are misguided and will be disappointed. Workers' organizations that depend on that process to solve the economic and social problems of their members (as most union officials do today) are courting destruction.

But independent working class politics is the exact opposite of such dependence on the bourgeois electoral process, because it utilizes participation in the electoral arena in order to promote class struggle. This is what the Marxist movement has done since its inception, in the socialist campaigns of Debs before World War I, in the CP's election campaigns in the 1920s, and in the SWP's campaigns since 1948. There is no danger in "electoralism" of this kind. It is entirely progressive and even inevitable as a stage in the struggles leading to revolution. Unless this side of the question is explained, too, warnings against the dangers of electoralism can become one-sided and therefore ineffective.

We would like to have better and more complete answers to our questions about the present stage of radicalization, the level of class consciousness, and the developing political consciousness of the working class. Readers who have something to say on what the election showed about these subjects are encouraged to submit articles or letters.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN NICARAGUA

by Paul LeBlanc

Paul LeBlanc is an historian and activist in the Central American solidarity movement. His book is not only a scholarly and well argued defense of the applicability of revolutionary Marxism to events in the world today, but is also a full and inspiring account of the "mobilization of an entire people."

Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua is available by mail for \$3.00 per copy
Write to FIT, P.O. Box 1947, New York, NY 10009

A LETTER TO THE MILITANT IT DIDN'T PRINT

by Jerry Gordon and Jim Lafferty

EMERGENCY NATIONAL CONFERENCE Against U.S. Military Intervention In Central America/The Caribbean

September 14-16, 1984 • Cleveland, Ohio

P.O. Box 21672, Cleveland, Ohio 44121 • (216) 398-0919

Coordinator
Jerry Gordon

October 30, 1984

Letter to the Editor (For Publication)
The Militant
14 Charles Lane
New York, New York 10014

To the Editor:

This letter is being written in response to the Militant's account of the Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean held in Cleveland September 14-16, 1984. Our starting point has to do with a meeting held in Washington, D.C., a little more than a month after the Cleveland conference. On October 23, representatives of national peace, anti-interventionist, anti-nuclear, religious, labor and other groups at the meeting voted to sponsor a march on Washington, D.C. (and West Coast cities to be named later) on Saturday, April 13, 1985, in support of four themes: an immediate end to U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, opposition to the nuclear arms race, money for jobs and human needs not war, and opposition to apartheid. Representatives of the Continuations Committee of the Emergency National Conference were present and participated in the meeting.

The October 23 meeting initiated two historic firsts. April 13 will mark the first time that virtually the entire anti-intervention movement has come together to sponsor a national demonstration against U.S. military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. This will also be the first time that the anti-intervention and anti-nuclear movements have joined forces in calling for a national demonstration. These were the twin goals of the Emergency National Conference.

Now what has been the role of the Militant in all this?

Your article (October 12, 1984, issue) on the Emergency National Conference was a crude distortion from beginning to end. The article both in substance and tone was implacably hostile to the conference, which after all was called to help forge the broadest possible unity and to mount urgently needed massive demonstrations against U.S. interventionist actions.

The thrust of the Militant's article was to portray the Emergency National Conference as small, narrow and inconsequential. To make your theme appear credible, you took gross liberties with the truth.

Instead of reporting the fact that the conference had over 150 labor sponsors and endorsers, you reduced the number to "several" who "initially endorsed" it. (Since the complete list of labor sponsors and endorsers was distributed in the registration kits, your figure cannot be attributed to journalistic sloppiness or ignorance.)

Instead of reporting that 650 people registered for the conference -- articles in both the Akron Beacon Journal and Guardian written by reporters who attended the conference said there were over 600 people present -- the Militant told its readers that only "some 300" attended.

Instead of reporting that hundreds of anti-intervention activists came to Cleveland from the ranks of labor, solidarity networks, peace groups, religious organizations, the women's rights movement, senior citizens, the campuses and other constituencies to conduct a serious discussion on a program to combat U.S. war actions in Central America and the Caribbean, the Militant article ignored this and instead carped about supposed busloads of people which you say the organizers "promised" and which did not materialize. You also claim that "support for the gathering faded as it drew closer." These statements are false to the core.

The fact of the matter is that the closer we got to the conference, the more rapidly it built. Some of the most significant endorsements -- especially from the labor movement -- came shortly before the conference began; the speakers' list broadened perceptibly; and the number of pre-conference registrations climbed substantially. Conference organizers, the Militant notwithstanding, never "promised busloads," or a specific attendance or anything else. We did our best to bring people together to plan united actions at a time of acute crisis and that was what we succeeded in doing.

The most reprehensible part of the Militant's article on the conference is the roll-call you took of particular radical groups present which you say played "the major role." We became accustomed to this kind of journalism during the Vietnam antiwar movement in articles by Evans and Novak, and in "exposes" by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (then called by a different name) and the FBI. How tragic to read baiting attacks of a similar vein now appearing in the Militant!

The fact is there were hundreds of independent activists at the Emergency National Conference coming from scores of unions (a number were elected officials), peace and anti-interventionist organizations. If any group played "the major role" it was they.

A total of 175 trade unionists attended the conference. Not only was this first national conference against U.S. military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean several times larger than the first national conference against the Vietnam war, but it is clear we are light years ahead in involving trade unionists.

To be sure, some major anti-interventionist forces both within and without the labor movement were not represented at the Cleveland conference. For that reason, the conference did not issue a call for nationwide demonstrations (as the Militant article also mistakenly reported) but adopted a proposal for action to be brought to the rest of the anti-intervention movement in an attempt to get united agreement.

The October 23 meeting in Washington, D.C., confirmed the correctness of this approach. Together with national groups such as CISPES, CALC, SANE, MOBE, WILPF, Nuclear Freeze, and a host of others who were pursuing a parallel course, a unification of the movement has occurred in support of the April 13 demonstrations. Certainly this will be welcomed by the people who have the most at stake: those under the gun in Central America and the Caribbean.

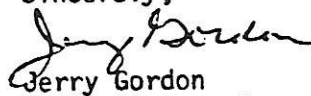
Yet, the Militant, almost alone, has up to this point remained outside this unification process, not even reporting its development in your October 12 issue, though it was discussed and agreed to at the Cleveland conference.

It is of course your right to select what you report. But it is also the right of others to object to the irresponsible distortions, misrepresentations, and baiting attacks you print in your paper. You ought to get your facts straight and quit conducting yourselves in a blindly factional and sectarian manner.

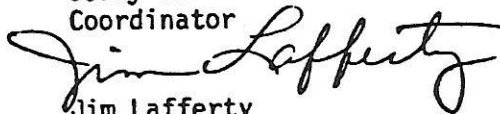
The Militant should have learned something from its disastrous 1981 experience when it shamelessly violence-baited the anti-intervention demonstration held in May of that year, also attacked it as being too narrowly sponsored, and in effect urged people not to build it or attend it. In spite of your dire warnings, 100,000 people turned out in a peaceful demonstration, the largest anti-intervention mobilization on Central America to-date.

April 13 is a date that everyone in the anti-intervention movement should unite around. Experience proves that once movement activists unite and agree -- and put the negativism and factionalism aside -- it becomes possible to galvanize into action ever broader sections of the population. The potential for a big turnout on April 13 is certainly there. We hope the Militant will join in building it. But if you choose to do no more than report on the event, let us hope you will at least do so with journalistic integrity.

Sincerely,



Jerry Gordon
Coordinator



Jim Lafferty
Conference Organizer and
Member, Continuations Committee

cc: Continuations Committee (Emergency National Conference)

[NOTE--A copy of this letter was received from Continuations Committee member Jean Tussey with the request that we publish it to set the record straight.]

AN OPEN LETTER TO FRED HALSTEAD

by David Williams

November 10, 1984

Dear Comrade Halstead,

I was disappointed not to see you in Cleveland at the National Emergency Conference Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. I hope you got a chance to read my report on it in issue No. 12 of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, and the article by David Riehle in No. 13 responding to the completely dishonest account printed in the Militant.

Like hundreds of other young socialists who were students during the late '60s and early '70s I got my first on-the-job political training in the anti-Vietnam war movement under your leadership. From 1969 on I was a participant in the events recounted in your book Out Now! I went to Cleveland to apply the things I learned then to the task at hand now--stopping the war in Central America and preventing further acts of war by Washington in the Caribbean. Since the stage of the Central American conflict is similar to the Vietnam situation of 1963-64--that is, before I and many other participants were involved--I certainly would have been quite interested in whatever insights you could have shared.

It is my understanding that the SWP at that time participated in and helped to organize whatever mass actions were possible, and that the party sought out other forces to participate in united-front action. Of course, at that time those who opposed the war first had to educate others on why the war was wrong. The Vietnam war at that time had far more support among the American people--including the working class--than does the Central America war drive today. I am certain--based on press reports, my own observations and on the participation in the Cleveland conference--that far more people are opposed to and ready to take action against the war in Central America, even at this early stage, than were ready to act against the Vietnam war at a comparable stage. I think that opposition can be and must be organized and mobilized in the streets. I went to Cleveland to help move that process forward, and that process was

moved forward.

The SWP played a big role throughout the Vietnam war in getting out the truth about the war and organizing and mobilizing opposition. When political forces which did not share the SWP's perspectives took the initiative, the party nonetheless supported their actions and did what it could to participate in and build whatever demonstrations took place. An example is the 1965 march and rally organized by the Students for a Democratic Society. The party criticized them, but for turning away from this work in the months which followed that action. The party's activity in the anti-Vietnam war movement was a model of the Leninist concept of building the united front.

The role played by the Socialist Workers Party at the Cleveland conference last September stands out in bleak contrast to the work described in Out Now! I must confess to being genuinely surprised at how far the SWP has distanced itself from the nonsectarian, united-front policies it had fifteen years ago.

I attended quite a few conferences of the Student Mobilization Committee and nearly all the conferences of the National Peace Action Coalition. Hundreds of members of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance helped to build those conferences and participated in them. The SWP played the critical role in keeping the antiwar movement on the independent mass action track. In sad contrast to that proud period the SWP fraction at last September's conference was no more than a handful, mostly from the Cleveland branch. It did nothing but sell literature through the first two days of the conference. During the debate on the action proposals the SWP made no contribution and abstained on all voting.

This was justified by their desire to see if the conference was "real," that is, whether it represented "real forces in motion." What this concept of "real forces in motion" is or how to put those real forces into motion was not

made clear. The only concrete proposal which SWP members in Cleveland counterposed to the work of the conference was organizing tours to Nicaragua, something that no one in the anti-intervention movement, to my knowledge, opposes.

By Sunday morning, it seemed, the SWP fraction had decided that the conference was "real" and decided to make an intervention, and a bizarre intervention it was. As I already reported in these pages, it began with a complaint that the conference had not paid enough attention to Grenada. The SWP speaker spoke in favor of the October 27 demonstration planned to protest the invasion and occupation of Grenada, to be held in Brooklyn, New York. The conference, however, had decided the previous night to support and build that demonstration and many more like it. Then two other SWP members took the floor to denounce the Nuclear Freeze, which had really gotten scant mention at the conference. In fact, the only context in which the Freeze movement had been discussed had been the need to involve its activists in the movement against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

My reaction to this was confusion. What on earth could the SWP hope to gain by acting in this way? Now, however, my confusion has turned to cold anger: after reading Omari Musa's report of the conference in the October 12 issue of The Militant, I can only conclude that the SWP is not interested in a strong, united anti-intervention movement. Musa's article is inaccurate from beginning to end; since he was there I can only conclude that for some reason he is lying.

If this conference was not broad enough, as Musa claims (a conclusion with which I disagree), why didn't the SWP do anything to broaden it? When the Vietnam war was going on one could always depend on the members of the SWP and YSA to do the hard day-to-day work of building the demonstrations, organizing the conferences, making the phone calls, printing and distributing the leaflets, putting out the mailings,

arranging transportation and housing--in short, insuring maximum participation from people who opposed the war. Believe me, the SWP has been sorely missed.

The leadership of the SWP has forgotten what the Transitional Program teaches and what has been demonstrated over and over in practice, including in the SWP leaders' own experience--that the working masses will not go into action only as a result of education by a revolutionary leadership, nor only as a result of their own experience in the day-to-day class struggle, but as a result of a combination of both. Large numbers of people do not take action spontaneously: they must be led by conscious political leaders--or misleaders. Any leadership worthy of the name will appeal to people on the basis of their own experience, in language they can understand. Otherwise, they will leave people behind and wind up leading only themselves.

At this stage the SWP is forever waiting for a spontaneous upsurge of the working class--which will not happen without the intervention of political leaders. If the revolutionary party defaults it will leave the working masses to the tender mercies of the Stalinists and labor bureaucrats. And the struggle will go down to defeat. As one SWP antiwar leader--I believe it was you, Comrade Halstead--once said: had it not been for the Socialist Workers Party the anti-Vietnam war movement would have been "flushed down the toilet of the Democratic Party."

Those of us who participated in the Cleveland conference and who will be working to build the actions projected there are not the kind to hold grudges. We want the SWP involved in this struggle. We want the SWP again to be the party that led the antiwar movement. Make a new turn!--back to participation in and attempting to provide leadership for the struggles of the working class and oppressed, the struggles for peace, freedom, equality, and decent living standards. Ultimately, these struggles add up to only one thing: the struggle for socialism.

SWP CALLS SPECIAL CONVENTION IN JANUARY

November 10 -- On October 5, 1984, the Socialist Workers Party Political Committee issued the call for a special pre-World Congress convention of the party to take place from January 12-15, 1985, in New York City. The proposed agenda is:

Draft Political Resolution
Workers' and Farmers' Government
Turn to the Industrial Unions
Women's Liberation
Organizational Norms of the Fourth
International

The agenda point on the Draft Political Resolution is included to provide for further discussion on the resolution adopted by the delegates at the regular party convention last August. That resolution was only introduced a few weeks before it was scheduled to be voted on in the branches. At the time, the party leadership pledged that there would be a further opportunity to discuss it. The resolution deals with many of the issues and problems which will be debated at the World Congress, and the Political Committee has therefore decided to utilize the pre-World Congress convention to fulfill this promise and is combining the discussion on the resolution with a discussion of the international questions.

The PC proposal makes no provision for any discussion of the political revolution in Poland--a topic which is on the agenda of the World Congress, but which the present leadership of the SWP has studiously avoided. It has never produced a resolution presenting its views, though representatives of the SWP have consistently opposed all resolu-

tions on Poland produced by the majority of the United Secretariat.

* * *

The written preconvention discussion bulletin was opened as of October 15 (though this fact was not announced in party branches until a week or more after that date, thereby limiting the time available to actually write and submit articles). The oral discussion in the branches, on the basis of which they will elect delegates, is being delayed until December, and only a month is allotted for it.

The PC sent a letter to branch executive committees (dated October 6) explaining that this discussion is being limited in order to "allow the branches to establish and maintain a rhythm of party life with a minimum of disruption." (It is one of the striking features of the present outlook of the SWP central leadership team that they consider political discussion to be a "disruption" of party life.) Also in order to keep this sort of "disruption" to a minimum, the convention call establishes a high member-to-delegate ratio (15 to 1), and the convention will be closed except to delegates, NC members, and invited guests. Rank and file party members will not be allowed to attend.

* * *

Despite the attempts of the Barnes leadership to downplay the importance of the discussion in the SWP leading up to the World Congress, this convention will nevertheless provide an opportunity for members to again make their voices heard, as they did before the August convention, in opposition to the leadership's turn away from Trotskyism and away from the Fourth International.

THE DISCUSSION BEGINS ON THE WRONG FOOT AGAIN

by Steve Bloom

Last May the SWP National Committee finally issued a call for the twice-postponed national party convention. It was a year late. The Barnes faction in the party leadership had used that extra year to purge the organization of all known or suspected opponents of its proposed programmatic changes. But even after the purge, and the subsequent mountain of slander against the expellees, the leadership still did not feel comfortable opening the pre-convention discussion period by presenting its political perspectives for debate and decision by the party. No draft political resolution--which should have been available at the beginning of the discussion--was presented for two more months.

Instead of a political resolution, the party was presented with one more set of slanderous charges against the expelled opposition--in the form of an "Information Bulletin" on the "Gerardo Nebbia Disruption Campaign." This bulletin printed what it called proof that Gerardo Nebbia had been an agent of the Workers League-Workers Revolutionary Party disruption campaign against the SWP before he was expelled from the party. It accused the Fourth Internationalist Tendency--which Nebbia had joined after his expulsion--of becoming part of the Healyite slander campaign. (The WL-WRP, or Healyites, assert that virtually the entire central leadership of the SWP is made up of police agents.)

We responded to these completely groundless accusations (see "A Dangerous Escalation of the Slander Against the F.I.T.," by Steve Bloom, Bulletin IDOM No. 8) but that did not keep them from having their desired effect--further poisoning the atmosphere against a free and democratic consideration of different views inside the SWP.

Now we have the beginning of the pre-World Congress discussion in the party. How does the Barnes faction commence? Does the party hear the leadership's thinking on the many and varied political problems and issues faced by revolutionary Marxists in the world today?

Running true to form, the first salvo from the SWP National Office is a

new, 99-page Information Bulletin (No. 6 in 1984, October). The main feature of this one is a report entitled "The Leadership Crisis in the Fourth International" given by Larry Seigle to a closed session of the August convention, where it was adopted by the delegates. It is 18 pages long, yet only the first five or so deal in the slightest with any substantive political issues. Most of these first pages and the entirety of the remaining 13 are concerned with organizational gripes and grievances against the majority leadership of the Fourth International.

There is little basis in fact for the charges in Seigle's report, and no justification for his outraged tone. The overwhelming majority of his accusations against the FI leadership are pure and simple falsifications.

Seigle's basic contention is that there is no majority of the FI. He claims that the appearance of a majority is preserved only because basic political differences are being covered up through unprincipled organizational measures. A "secret faction" which controls the United Secretariat Bureau applies bureaucratic "supercentralist" methods--to intervene and overthrow the decisions of elected leaderships of sections, and to slander the leadership of the SWP. This "secret faction" in the Bureau, again according to Seigle, is striving to sidetrack the pre-World Congress discussion onto organizational problems, and is even attempting to split the International. It does this rather than take on a political debate with the SWP because such a debate would supposedly expose the unprincipled nature of this USec majority.

This is quite a remarkable construct. Let's see if there is any validity to it.

WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT

The sole question which Seigle cites to justify his claim of a United Secretariat majority without a principled political basis is the workers' and farmers' government. But the differences which exist on this question within the majority current in the FI today are not

new. They reflect differing assessments of the whole series of revolutionary developments which took place after World War II. These differences concern questions of analysis (what occurred in places like Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, China, etc.) and of terminology (what was and is the meaning of the term "workers' and farmers' government" as it has been used by the revolutionary Marxist movement in the past and as it should be used by us today). Disagreements on these questions have been part of the general political debate and discussion in the International for many years. It will no doubt take some additional time before a common appreciation of them is achieved. (For the views of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency see the "Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government," in Bulletin IDOM No. 6.)

Does the existence of an international majority which contains within it such disagreements constitute an unprincipled combination as the SWP leadership asserts in Seigle's report? No, it does not. Because the debate in the FI today over the question of the workers' and farmers' government is not over a problem of historical analysis or terminology. It is not even over a more immediate and important question--what our assessment is of current developments in Central America and the Caribbean (though this might, under certain circumstances, be a legitimate cause for the creation of international tendencies or factions).

The dispute in the Fourth International today is over a question of fundamental programmatic perspective. And the challenge to our basic program comes from the Barnes faction in the leadership of the SWP. Faced with this challenge it is not only correct, it is absolutely essential, for lesser differences--over historical analysis, terminology, and even a concrete assessment of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua today--to be subordinated to an overall defense of the revolutionary Marxist program.

The main programmatic document of the Barnes faction (in fact the only programmatic document which it has presented in the international discussion) is the report from the February-March 1982 SWP National Committee Plenum entitled "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States." This report was subsequently adopted by the delegates to the August 1984 party convention. Its line is to abandon the basic lesson of every revolutionary experience since the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in 1917--that the kind of government

necessary to successfully defend the interests of the masses in the age of imperialism is a workers' government allied with the poor peasantry. This is what Marx, Engels, Lenin (as well as the Fourth International since its founding) have called the dictatorship of the proletariat. This concept is the fundamental kernel of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

Today the Barnes faction of the International openly rejects permanent revolution. All of those who are allied with the United Secretariat majority uphold and defend it. The disagreements within that majority bloc are not of a programmatic character, while our common disagreement with the SWP position is. As important as some of the other disagreements may be, we can only satisfactorily discuss and settle them in the context of a correct overall program.

The most important of the differences within the majority has been over the class character of the Nicaraguan government that was established after the overthrow of Somoza. At the 1979 World Congress, a minority led by the Socialist Workers Party delegation took the position that the Sandinistas had conquered power in July 1979, and that this meant the creation of a workers' and farmers' government. Present members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, who were then members of the SWP, agreed with this position. (The term "workers' and farmers' government" had not yet been given its new meaning in the SWP as being programmatically counterposed to permanent revolution--at least not openly.) And it is a position that we still agree with (of course given a correct understanding of the meaning of "workers' and farmers' government"). The Sandinistas took power in July 1979, and established a government which defended--from the outset--the interests of the workers and poor peasants.

A majority at the 1979 World Congress rejected this view. They characterized the situation in Nicaragua as one of "dual power" between the workers and peasants (represented by the FSLN) on the one hand and the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie on the other. This position was subsequently changed, and the May 1982 meeting of the International Executive Committee voted overwhelmingly to characterize the regimes in Nicaragua and Grenada as workers' and farmers' governments. But there was still disagreement over what that term meant, as well as over whether this characterization regarding Nicaragua should date from July 1979 or from some later event.

The differences on this issue among

the majority of the Fourth International have now narrowed even further. The United Secretariat resolution on Central America proposed for the coming World Congress explicitly states that political power passed into the hands of the FSLN in July 1979, and that this fact meant a qualitative transformation--the constitution of a government which ruled in the interests of the masses, and against the bourgeoisie. Differences remain over what to call such a government (is it a workers' and farmers' government, a workers' state, a dictatorship of the proletariat, or some combination of these terms?) but the class content, which is clearly and correctly explained in the resolution, is far more important.

There are still those in the International, among the supporters of permanent revolution, who would disagree with this conclusion and contend that the government which came to power in 1979 was not fundamentally proletarian in its character; that it was some kind of bourgeois coalition, or petty-bourgeois government. But this tendency now appears to be in a decided minority.

Seigle declares that the international majority has refused to publish its views on the workers' and farmers' government question--allegedly because this would expose its divisions. This accusation lays the basis for his charge that the United Secretariat leadership constitutes a "secret faction" (which he defines as one that keeps its political program a secret). But the "Report on the Current Stage of Building the International," which was adopted by the majority of the United Secretariat in January 1984 and published in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin--well before Seigle's report to the convention--presents a clear view on this issue, as it does concerning all of the disagreements between the international majority and the SWP leadership.

It is true that some of the formulations used in the "Building the International" report reflect the approach to the workers' and farmers' government question of Ernest Mandel and the European FI leaderships. The F.I.T. in the United States and others disagree with some aspects of it. But only the most sectarian attitude could allow these disagreements to stand in the way of supporting the general line of this document. Whatever formulations we disagree with do not in any way affect what is fundamental--the defense of our basic programmatic perspectives. The resolution correctly reaffirms the kind of government we advocate to carry through

the transition from capitalism to socialism: a workers government, in alliance with the poor peasantry (a dictatorship of the proletariat).

OTHER POLITICAL ISSUES

So there is clearly no basis in fact for Seigle's charge of a secret faction in the FI which is subordinating principled differences over the workers' and farmers' government. And Seigle is unable to find any other political question on which to base his charge of an unprincipled combination in the leadership of the USec. That's because there is agreement within the international majority on all of the most fundamental political questions facing our world movement today.

Seigle uses his charge that the United Secretariat majority fails to express its view on the workers' and farmers' government as a smokescreen. He must cover over the fact that it is the SWP itself which has consistently failed to put its line forward on a whole series of questions facing the Fourth International.

In his report Seigle asserts that this charge "is completely false. The leadership of the SWP has more resolutions, line reports, and lengthy articles in print explaining its views on the major questions than it has ever had." But such a statement is extremely misleading at best. Which of the "resolutions, line reports, and lengthy articles" are supposed to be the basis for a discussion at the World Congress? Isn't it an obligation for the SWP leadership to clearly state its platform in the international discussion so that all members of the FI can know exactly what it stands on? Articles in the SWP press or reports to SWP leadership bodies are no substitute for this.

In fact, Seigle's reliance on "line reports" is a continuation of a very bad method which has been adopted by the Barnes leadership in the last few years. At all of the plenums of the SWP National Committee, from the 1981 convention to the time the four opposition NC members were suspended from the party in August 1983, the majority faction in the NC did not introduce a single written resolution for a vote. All decisions were based on oral reports (and most of those were never published in any form).

As to "lengthy articles," there have, indeed, been a rash of these by central party leaders since 1981--repudiating Trotskyism and permanent revolution, and revising our program. All of these articles were written without any

discussion or decision by the party as a whole. To this day, these programmatic changes have not been voted on by anyone, except in the most oblique form through the question of the workers' and farmers' government. To fall back on such "lengthy articles" as an expression of the views of the SWP leadership in the pre-World Congress debate is to make a mockery of democratic functioning in the SWP and in our world movement.

Since the 1979 World Congress, the SWP leadership has opposed every major resolution adopted by any leadership body of the International. The questions involved include the current international situation, Poland, Iran, building revolutionary youth organizations, anti-war work, etc. Many of these questions are on the agenda for the World Congress. But there has not been a single resolution on any of these subjects presented by the Barnes faction in the International. Their stated positions on them so far consist of a series of negatives.

THE FI AND THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REVOLUTION

According to Seigle, all of the supposed crimes of the United Secretariat majority--its alleged international secret factionalism--stem from a political retreat in the face of the Central American revolution. The majority, he tells us, "recoiled from the advance of the proletarian leaderships in Central America and the Caribbean" (p. 8). This supposedly accounts for the blind factional hostility to the SWP which, we are informed by Seigle once again, is the greatest champion of reaching out to the "new leaderships."

But anyone who looks at the real record will find that the FI and those sections of the International which support the United Secretariat majority have been in the forefront of solidarity with the Central American revolution. In terms of real solidarity, in fact, they have done far more than the SWP. Activities have included organizing material support, united front defense efforts, tours of Sandinista youth under the auspices of Fourth Internationalist groups in Europe, etc.

The "retreat" of the Fourth International in the face of the Nicaraguan revolution is a complete fabrication of the SWP leadership, which has attempted to control information that gets to members of the party, and has hidden, as best it could, the real record of the FI on this question in order to facilitate the slander campaign. But that cannot

change the facts--which party members can discover for themselves with a little effort.

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF HORROR STORIES

The vast array of organizational atrocity stories concerning the functioning of the United Secretariat majority and the USec Bureau--which as we noted takes up the overwhelming majority of Seigle's report--is likewise based on conscious dishonesty and lies, with an occasional half-truth thrown in to spice things up. It would be impossible to document all of the falsifications without an encyclopedic effort. But it is most interesting that some of them are exposed by Seigle himself. The facts he cites in a number of cases are in complete contradiction to what he asserts about them. Let's examine two cases:

Seigle spends more than three pages (almost 20 percent of his report) discussing the basis on which the SWP leadership has excluded representatives of the United Secretariat Bureau from meetings of the party National Committee during the last year: "The Bureau Faction has implemented a policy of violating the integrity of leadership committee meetings, making it impossible for these committees to function" (p.14). What is behind this charge? Seigle informs us that members of the USec who attended NC plenums reported to others in the International--outside of the Secretariat--some of what was said.

Seigle waxes indignant: "The members of the committee are not going to say freely what they think if they are worried about their remarks being printed up and sent out all over the world. They are not going to feel comfortable raising tentative ideas, thinking out loud, raising criticisms--not if they have to speak always 'for the record'" (p. 16). But search as we might through the evidence compiled by Seigle, we cannot find any example of representatives of the United Secretariat reporting "tentative ideas, thinking out loud," or "criticisms." Two cases are cited in the report. Both are of accounts presented by USec members to leaderships of other sections about charges or accusations made against them at SWP NC meetings. In both cases, the charges were made by reporters for the Political Committee in formal reports. Apparently the Barnes leadership wants to be able to make such charges without having to take responsibility within the FI for doing so.

Not only is this charge against the USec Bureau, as presented by Comrade

Seigle, totally unfounded, it is also completely hypocritical. This too is unambiguously established by Seigle's report. There is someone who reports comments made by SWP NC members in the course of political deliberations. But it is Seigle himself--who feels no restraint at paraphrasing (quite inaccurately on the whole) comments made during NC discussions by Frank Lovell, Nat Weinstein, Lynn Henderson, and myself.

Another example of a falsification which is not even transparently covered up in the report is on page 10. Seigle quotes from a motion adopted by the May 1984 meeting of the United Secretariat. This characterized the line of the Barnes report, "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the U.S.," as "in contradiction to the general line expressed in the established programmatic documents of our movement."

Then Seigle declares: ". . . The majority of the United Secretariat has proclaimed that the position of the SWP National Committee . . . is beyond the bounds of Marxism." Indeed! Is that what "in contradiction to the general line expressed in the established programmatic documents of our movement" really means? Seigle must have believed that his listeners at the convention had very short attention spans, and could not remember what he had said in his last breath. Repeating this in a printed document is even more bizarre. And Seigle makes his statement--characterizing the motion adopted by the United Secretariat as "reading out of the program of Marxism" the SWP's position on the workers' and farmers' government--not once, but no fewer than three times in four paragraphs.

DIGGING A LITTLE MORE DEEPLY

Not all of the charges against the USec Bureau or the international majority in this report are such transparent frauds. But some others are easily exposed simply by looking at the appendices printed in the Information Bulletin. For example, Seigle refers to a July 25 letter from three members of the USec Bureau as an "ultimatum" to the convention. But anyone who turns to the letter itself will be unable to find any ultimatum contained within it. It is simply an expression of a political opinion about the SWP leadership's announced policy of excluding USec representatives from the convention (calling it "undemocratic, unprincipled and bureaucratic") and of greetings to the convention delegates. Perhaps Seigle hopes that members

of the party simply won't get around to checking on the facts for themselves.

The same is true about some of the charges made in the report against the Opposition Bloc in the SWP National Committee, which was formed by the two minority tendencies in the NC in May of 1983. (Though the main fire in this bulletin is aimed at the USec, a portion is still reserved for the expelled opposition in the United States.)

Seigle goes on at great length about the Bloc in a section subtitled "Responsibilities of faction." This is a reference to the designation of the Bloc as a faction, which was a unilateral act by the NC majority, and is a linchpin of the fraud which later led to the expulsion of the Bloc's members from the party. The Barnes leadership insisted that our actions did not conform to those demanded of a faction according to their version of the norms of the SWP.

The basis of the characterization of the Bloc as a faction is explained by Seigle as follows: "The 'Platform' [of the Bloc] was an appeal to the ranks to rise up and throw out the leadership. These comrades had concluded that without replacing the leadership, no alteration in political line would suffice to salvage the party. It was this objective--not the scope of political differences raised--that defined this formation as a faction" (p. 20). His assertion that the Bloc called for the overthrow of the leadership is so important to Seigle's case that he repeats it over and over again.

But is it true? Once again party members who make an effort can find out for themselves. After a delay of a year and a half, this latest Information Bulletin finally publishes the "Platform to Overcome the Crisis in the Party," which was the founding document of the Opposition Bloc. Any member who looks through the platform to find its call "to the ranks to rise up and throw out the leadership" will be sorely disappointed.

There was an appeal to the ranks in the platform. Here it is in full: "The party ranks will have to intervene in order to reverse the current disastrous policies." Would such an intervention require "throw[ing] out the leadership"? That depended strictly on the further evolution of the discussion and of the response by the leadership to the political intervention of the ranks. This response was by no means a foregone conclusion in May 1983, when the platform was introduced; it specifically and carefully avoided making any call for the leadership's ouster. Only a leader-

ship which has totally separated itself from the party, which considers itself an independent entity from the party rank and file, can interpret a call for the membership of the organization to intervene in a discussion as a call for its own overthrow.

Isn't Seigle smart enough to know that some people will check things out for themselves and catch on to such blatant distortions? Yes, but he figures that most people won't. In this respect he is as cynical as the Reaganite official who said, just before the November election: "You can say anything you want during a [television] debate and 80 million people hear it." If reporters then document that a candidate spoke untruthfully, "so what? Maybe 200 people read it or 2,000 or 20,000" (New York Times, Nov. 1, 1984).

And, of course, even with the material made available in the new bulletin, not all of the relevant documentation needed to refute Seigle's false charges is available to party members. In this category, for example, it is interesting to look at the appendix entitled "Correspondence with National Committee Minority Faction Members, August 1983." The party leadership wants to give the impression that they have printed here all of the letters relating to the breakup of the Opposition Bloc, which is what led to the expulsion of its members. But there is one letter that is not published. It is from Frank Lovell and me, dated August 8, explaining the reasons for the breakup (see Bulletin IDOM No. 4). And why is this one left out of the SWP's collection? Because the insistence that no explanation for the Bloc's end was ever presented to the National Committee is central to the tissue of lies used to justify our suspension in August 1983, and our later expulsion from the party.

ONCE AGAIN ON THE GERARDO NEBBIA CASE

Seigle repeats, in this convention report, the main thrust of the SWP leadership's charges against the F.I.T. in the Gerardo Nebbia case--that we have become part of the Healyite disruption campaign against the party. This has been answered thoroughly in the Bulletin IDOM article referred to earlier, but there is one additional point which should be noted. Seigle characterizes the F.I.T.'s handling of the Nebbia case as a "coup for the Healyites." If this is true, then it is strange that the Healyites have not been able to exploit this "coup." One would expect them to make a big campaign out of their vic-

tory--hoodwinking the F.I.T. into defending one of their agents.

But the Healyites cannot exploit the F.I.T.'s handling of the Nebbia case, because the approach we took--of demanding material proof that a member of our organization was an agent before taking disciplinary action against him (not being satisfied with unsubstantiated accusations)--is the complete opposite of the methods used by the Healyites in their slander campaign against the SWP.

The F.I.T. undertook an honest and serious investigation of the charges against Nebbia. As a result of our findings he was expelled from the F.I.T.--not for being an "agent of the Healyite disruption campaign," as the SWP leadership had charged, but for a clearly proven act of indiscipline (see article in Bulletin IDOM No. 12). We informed the SWP leadership of this in September, and a short time later sent them a copy of an F.I.T. Internal Information Bulletin which contained the complete report of the New York Local Organizing Committee on the case. We informed them that this bulletin should be made available to members of the SWP. To date, this has not been done. The party membership has not even been informed of the action taken by the F.I.T., or the reasons for it. Instead the SWP leadership reprints its slanderous allegations against us.

A MIRROR IMAGE OF THEMSELVES

Expelled members of the SWP, and others who have experienced the evolution of the party over the past few years, will find that Seigle's false charges--of bureaucratic functioning to suppress political debate--against the Fourth International majority correspond to the policies which have actually been followed by the Barnes faction in the SWP. Seigle declares: "The organizational measures being implemented by the Bureau Faction are blocking the discussion, and driving the International toward a spreading split." Unless this is corrected, he warns, "the political discussion can't take place in an atmosphere in which political clarification can be achieved" (p. 11).

The place for the SWP leadership to demonstrate their opposition to a split in the International and an interest in a discussion that can "take place in an atmosphere in which political clarification can be achieved" is here, in the United States. That is what the demand of the F.I.T. has been since its founding: "Reintegrate the expelled members and open up the pages of the party bul-

letin to us so we can answer your lies and distortions!" We now can add: "Implement in the SWP the policies you hypocritically demand for the International!"

The SWP leadership claims that the USec majority is suppressing the discussion on the workers' and farmers' government. But the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the SWP National Committee submitted its "Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government" and an accompanying article by me, "The Workers' and Farmers' Government and the Socialist Revolution," in September 1982. The SWP Political Committee blocked its publication in the IIDB, refused to publish it in an internal Bulletin for the information of the party membership, and refused even to make it available for the information of the National Committee--despite repeated requests that it do these things.

Seigle's report complains about alleged threats of expulsion against members of the pro-Barnes minority of the British section. He is most indignant at this. But there is a touch of irony in his indignation. Seigle informs us that the SWP leadership "will continue to consider as Fourth Internationalists anyone" expelled from the British section on what he calls "spurious and undemocratic grounds." He seems not to notice that this assertion completely destroys the foundation of one of his main charges against the United Secretariat majority--that it "continues to consider as Fourth Internationalists" members undemocratically expelled from the SWP "on spurious and undemocratic grounds."

The action of the USec in recognizing expelled SWP members is alleged to be completely unacceptable; an example of international "supercentralism"; an attempt to overturn the decisions of an "elected national leadership," etc. But apparently it's O.K. for the SWP to overturn any similar decision of the British section that it doesn't like. (The fact is, of course, that there have been no expulsions from the British section. The actual expulsions have taken place in the U.S.A.)

Seigle's accusation that the FI leadership has used "supercentralism" as a factional tool is also off target. It is the SWP leadership that has in fact been introducing a supercentralist form of organization. It was on the basis of

the need for this that it outlawed all rank and file discussion of the leadership's policies for almost three years. The claim was made that such a policy was a political necessity--to keep the party from going off the track in a period which, the leadership asserted, was characterized by tremendous pressure from the imperialist war drive and alien class forces. The reality, of course, was that this factional tool of "supercentralism" in the hands of the Barnes leadership was used to isolate, intimidate, frame up, and ultimately expel all known or suspected oppositionists without giving us a chance to have our voices heard among the ranks of the SWP.

The Seigle report accuses the United Secretariat majority of organizing a faction that refuses to reveal its programmatic positions. But it is clear that the Barnes leadership had begun to change its mind on permanent revolution and other key questions as early as 1979 (see article by Naomi Allen in this issue of Bulletin IDOM). It kept these views a secret from the party membership until after the 1981 convention--and even then did not completely express its new programmatic outlook, introducing the new concepts piecemeal and over a period of years.

Seigle falsely accuses members of the SWP NC minority of refusing to accept their responsibility to serve on the party Political Committee. Yet it is the SWP that has, since 1980, refused repeatedly to send a representative to work with the Bureau of the United Secretariat.

It is the SWP leadership, not the majority of the Fourth International, that has made every effort to place this discussion on the plane of organizational atrocities and abuses. The Platform of the Opposition Bloc has now been published. Its contents remain valid, and its political conclusions have been completely borne out by subsequent events. But the Barnes faction has still not presented a political answer to these ideas. It responds only with long bulletins concerned with alleged "violations of organizational norms" and other horror stories designed to cover up political issues. That is because these comrades cannot defend their new line against a principled debate by those in this country and in our world movement who uphold the program of Trotskyism which they now reject.

OPPOSITION BLOC'S PLATFORM FINALLY PUBLISHED

by David Williams

In the new Information Bulletin entitled "The Leadership Crisis in the Fourth International," the Socialist Workers Party leadership has for the first time made available to its ranks the "Platform to Overcome the Crisis in the Party." This document was submitted to the May 1983 NC plenum--eighteen months ago--by the Opposition Bloc of the Fourth Internationalist Caucus and the Trotskyist Tendency (see Bulletin IDOM No. 3).

Much has happened since then. At that plenum, the NC voted to postpone the constitutionally required national convention of the SWP. Three months later, the convention was postponed again. Seven months later the party purged the entire opposition. Nine months later the party established a policy of excluding members of the expelled opposition from public party forums, campaign events, and bookstores. Thirteen months later the party held the most sterile preconvention discussion in its history, chilled at the outset by Jack Barnes's stern warning to Eileen G. against forming a tendency around ideas similar to those of the expelled opposition. During the convention in August the appeals of the expellees were rejected, and Eileen G. herself was summarily expelled.

Now that the party leadership has made it clear how it will deal with those who argue for positions with which it disagrees, after eighteen months of slander and falsification against the opposition, it feels confident enough to publish, finally, the views of the Opposition Bloc.

Its confidence may prove false, or rather, will prove false. The ideas presented in the "Platform" are not off-the-wall ravings of wild sectarians; nor are they in any way an attack on the Socialist Workers Party, its program, or its traditions. Any SWP member who has questions about the party's current policies will find a great many answers here. Furthermore, any comrade who reads this document will realize that the party leadership has not really responded to the political points raised in it.

It is unfortunate indeed that this document appears before the party ranks not only after the expulsion of the oppositionists but after the loss of hundreds of dedicated activists who simply became demoralized and disoriented by the false policies of the Barnes leadership. Lacking experience in the working class movement--because of historical circumstances--many assumed that the leadership was following a true revolutionary socialist policy in the working class. Based on that assumption, many concluded that revolutionary socialism is bankrupt and has nothing positive to offer working people. Most of these talented and intelligent young comrades have simply turned their attention to their own lives and toward making the best of it in capitalist society. As the capitalist crisis deepens a great many of them may return to the revolutionary movement, but the Socialist Workers Party will not be able to attract them with its present orientation. The program to which these comrades were recruited, and which can win them back, is to be found in the document which the party leadership now dares to print: the "Platform to Overcome the Crisis in the Party."

LOSS OF OPTIMISM

The "Platform" is, at the outset, remarkable for its optimism--in contrast to the near despair of the SWP leadership's reports and resolutions. Over and over one hears from the party leadership that the working class must suffer many more defeats before it comes to a revolutionary perspective, that it will not be possible to build a mass antiwar movement until American GIs begin dying in large numbers in Central America, that the beginning of "major class battles" will make it possible to win workers to the revolutionary party, with the implication that it will not be possible before those battles take place. In the years of the party's and the Young Socialist Alliance's greatest growth the Trotskyist movement was distinguished by its optimism. We had confidence that our

program was right and that we could convince people that it was right. We had confidence that our strategy was a winning strategy--that it could win significant victories against the class enemy. And both were true! The party and YSA grew steadily, and its policy of building a united-front antiwar movement was a major factor in U.S. imperialism's defeat in Vietnam.

The party leadership thought that it could simply carry that authority into the working class in 1975-76. It gave very little thought to the difference between the radicalization of the student youth and the radicalization of the working class and national minorities, and the party's gains fell far short of projections. The party membership, to a great extent, had to learn how to talk politics to working people. That meant first learning how to listen to working people. Neither was learned, and soon the party leadership began searching for shortcuts, for gimmicks which would bring working people into the party. There was a name for whatever gimmick was currently in favor--"The Turn." The inability of "The Turn," in its different manifestations, to actually win recruits to the party in the short term has led to a longer term and more deep-going lack of confidence in the party's ability to win the working class to its perspectives and, ultimately, in the working class's ability to make social change at all. The irony of the situation is that profound struggles of the working class are developing throughout the world, and real party-building gains can be made in the working class if a well-thought-out turn to industry is carried out. However, the SWP has not done that. It has been left behind, commenting on the sidelines.

DEEPENING OF THE ERRORS

Dialectical analysis will always predict--and practice will always prove--that in politics an error which is not corrected will be deepened and extended. In the Socialist Workers Party a mistaken analysis has led to get-rich-quick schemes. The failure of those get-rich-quick schemes has led to deep programmatic revisions, as the party begins to search for substitutes to the Leninist strategy of party building and, ultimately, to its proletarian orientation. The central leadership is today looking toward the revolutionary currents in Central America and the Caribbean as such a substitute. They seem to be trying to capitalize on the authority

of these revolutions to increase their authority in the radical movement in the United States. However, there are glaring political differences between Trotskyism and the political program of the Cuban Communist Party--differences between revolutionary currents, to be sure, not between revolutionism and reformism, but serious differences nonetheless. The response of the Socialist Workers Party leaders has been to scrap the Trotskyist positions and to adapt to those of the Cuban CP.

The response of the Barnes team to criticism of this policy has been to accuse its critics of not supporting the Central American and Caribbean revolutions or of failing to recognize the revolutionary currents in those countries. Members of the SWP, for example, have spread the slander that "Breitman is for political revolution in Cuba." Members of the party who read the platform, however, will read: "We seek to learn from, influence, and fuse with the best of the revolutionary movements that have emerged in the course of struggles such as those in Central America and the Caribbean. We reject the false characterization of the Castroist current as a variety of Stalinism, or as a counter-revolutionary force today in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Grenada, etc. Sections of the Fourth International place no sectarian obstacles in the path of fraternal collaboration, joint action, and ultimate organic fusion with all such revolutionary forces. But we also aim to bring to this process all the lessons we have learned about the world historical struggle of workers and their allies for freedom. We must continue to loyally present our critical-minded view of the way forward at each stage in the fight against world capitalism." Larry Seigle, in his report to the 1984 convention, did not respond to this political point. Any serious-minded party member who reads the "Platform" will wonder why.

THE DISCUSSION WILL TAKE PLACE

The attempt to stifle political discussion in the Socialist Workers Party ranks will never be successful; the discussion will take place, if not in the written discussion bulletins or in the branch oral discussions, in more informal settings. One can be certain that many comrades will be far more inclined to speak their minds freely and openly in that setting than they will be in the party's officially organized discussion. That is an unfortunate state

of affairs; it is, nevertheless, the reality.

Many members of the Socialist Workers Party who have had a chance to read the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism have begun asking the kinds of questions one would expect from serious revolutionists. How many more questions will the publication of the "Platform" provoke?

There is a way the SWP leadership can solve the problems which publication of this "Platform" will cause them. That is to reintegrate the expelled oppositionists as members of the SWP and include them in the discussion leading up to the party convention scheduled for January. Allowing the real political discussion to take place in the branches

and in the printed bulletin where it belongs--by allowing the same kind of discussion which is going on now in comrades' apartments, over the telephone lines, and in the U.S. mail. We need a discussion in which all points of view are represented honestly, in which Comrade Breitman, for example, can speak for himself instead of having his views misrepresented. This can only help the SWP.

Comrade Barnes, I will reissue the challenge you made to the International Majority Tendency in 1973: If you like we can have a political discussion. If you don't like, we're going to have one anyway.

DOCUMENTS FROM THE STRUGGLE IN THE SWP AND THE FI

Platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency — 75¢

The Cuban Revolution, the Castroist Current, and the Fourth International — 75¢

Why We Oppose the SWP's New Line on Castroism — 75¢

The Iranian Revolution and the Dangers That Threaten It — 75¢

Poland, the Fourth International, and the Socialist Workers Party — 75¢

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

WOMEN AND THE SWP: 1979-1984

by Laura Cole

It is odd to see the topic of "Women's Liberation" included in the proposed agenda for the Socialist Workers Party special pre-World Congress Convention in January. Certainly, no document was devoted to the question during the discussion period leading up to the August 1984 convention. But then the Barnes leadership seems most reluctant to put their theoretical intentions in writing until exposed by events. What event can have exposed their indifference to the women's movement? It would be nice to think that perhaps it was dissatisfaction from the membership about the dishonesty and irrelevance of those few paragraphs in the 1984 Draft Political Resolution which the leadership did condescend to make about women. Since the 1984 resolution is being discussed again and will be voted on again at the January convention, it is worth continued attention. But first we ought to try to fit it into its correct background.

1979 A HIGH POINT

Looking back now, it is clear that 1979 marked the high point in the development of the SWP's theory and practice in relation to the women's movement; since 1979 the SWP leadership has been retreating, ideologically and practically, from its achievements in the preceding decade.

The 1979 document, "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation," was adopted enthusiastically by both the SWP convention in August and the World Congress of the Fourth International in November. The best document on the subject ever produced by the Marxist movement, it unequivocally affirmed the necessity and desirability of an independent women's movement and our duty to help build it. It did not pretend to have the answers to all questions but it pointed the revolutionary movement in the right direction, indicating the method for understanding the women's struggle better and the strategy and tactics for helping to build the women's movement as

an ally of the working class.

Unfortunately, at the very time that this excellent resolution (reprinted in 1979 World Congress of the Fourth International: Major Resolutions and Reports) was being adopted amid high hopes for greater and more effective participation in women's struggles, the leaders of the SWP were beginning to lose confidence in the program of the SWP and the FI, and to begin seeking shortcuts that put question marks over that program and the party's perspectives, including its perspective about women's liberation.

Since 1979 the SWP's activity in the women's movement has dwindled almost to the vanishing point. This is obvious to every member who was around in the 70s and can compare what the SWP did in that period with its abstentionism in the last five years. Not so obvious is the decline in the political and ideological level of the SWP's major documents since 1979 -- the political resolutions adopted at the 1981 and 1984 national conventions. The very brief passage on women in the 1981 resolution had a chilling effect on the party. In contrast to the promise which the document holds out for continued work and struggle in the Black community, hope for women seems dim and in the distant future. Women seem trapped in "low-paying, nonunion, and often quasi-part-time jobs as commercial, service, and clerical workers." The four paragraphs devoted to their struggle ends by saying: "During the current recession, however, the ruling class has driven many women out of industry and intensified its attack on all gains won by women in recent years." This negative perspective not only was and is incorrect, it says much about the party's inattention to the happenings in the real world.

WOMEN BELITTLED IN 1984 DOCUMENT

This brings us to the 1984 resolution and its short section on women. In an effort to deny that women as a group might respond to their oppression by

perceiving some political issues differently than men do (the "gender gap"), the 1984 Political Resolution (page 22) tries to belittle the importance of women and their struggles by counterposing them to those of Blacks. In the following paragraphs, women are bounced between white males and all Blacks in what can only be viewed as a crass attempt to confound the SWP's own past positions on the subject. For example, the document states: "What is overlooked is that while women as a sex are not more proletarian than men, Blacks as a nationality are substantially more proletarian than whites. Moreover, Blacks are an oppressed nationality and among the most exploited section of the working class. For these reasons, Blacks are in general more progressive than whites."

Well, to begin with, some Blacks are women. And in June 1984, according to the Department of Labor, 1,818,000 Black women were employed as compared with 1,811,000 Black men. Furthermore, an article in U.S. News and World Report (August 6, 1984) states that women in the U.S. already outnumber males in the work force. A recent article in the New York Times (November 25, 1984) indicates that this process is accelerating. While this kind of information is difficult to extract from statistical tables published by the Department of Labor since they present figures by sex only for workers over age 20, the Times article quotes the Bureau of Labor Statistics as saying that 70 percent of new jobs in the 1980s and 1990s will be taken by females.

Clearly, if women are not yet a majority of the proletariat, they very shortly will be. But does that percentage point magically elevate them into being more proletarian than they are now, or more proletarian compared with men or Blacks? Will men then become less proletarian than women? How does one measure the degree of being proletarian? The SWP document maintains that women are less proletarian than men because "Historically, women are less likely than men to have the opportunity to work a job, or to participate in working-class organizations and class battles out of which progressive ideas are formed and take hold. Today, the majority of adult women in the United States still pass many years confined in individual homes, relegated to the mind-deadening drudgery of household chores carried out in isolation, and constricted by the needs of family life. Even working-class women still do not

have opportunities equal to men to participate in the unions or to learn from and be part of the class struggle against the employers on the job."

Aside from the fact that this statement is historically inaccurate, it is incredibly insulting to women! Women have participated in and frequently been in the forefront of every major industrial step since the invention of the spinning jenny and the development of motor-driven machinery. Nowhere in the entire section of the Draft Political Resolution does one get a sense that women have ever accomplished anything. One would never know that women were among the first industrial workers, organized unions, led strikes. No one would have any sense that women had led movements, demonstrated against injustices, protested in the streets. No one would ever know that the women's movement -- the present women's movement -- led a struggle, in the streets, to legalize abortion.

Yet being proletarian is apparently not everything for the SWP leadership. In their 1981 National Committee Draft Political Resolution (Vol. 37, No. 1, page 20), an interesting bridge along the path from revolutionary program to revisionism, they describe farmers as follows: "As commodity producers who own, or aspire to own, the land they work, most farmers are not part of the working class (although a significant number must also work a job to ensure a living income). But like wage workers, farmers are exploited by the capitalists; workers are wage slaves, farmers are debt slaves." I defy anyone to find today's SWP document bending-over-backwards to explain the progressive and revolutionary potential of women -- "domestic slaves" from time immemorial -- as is done with farmers.

The 1984 document struggles on. "As a result of these objective factors, a higher percentage of women than of men are susceptible to reactionary 'solutions' and right-wing demagogy, which is aimed against the class interests of the proletariat. This point was stressed in the resolution 'Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation,' adopted by the Socialist Workers Party in 1979."

The first point I want to make is that this reactionary characterization of women was not stressed in the 1979 resolution. That resolution covers 28 densely-set pages, out of which the SWP document refers to one paragraph and then construes it incorrectly. The paragraph states that women are targeted

by right wing organizations and appealed to on the basis of their double burden, but does not characterize women (especially working class women) as necessarily succumbing to this appeal. Such a characterization flies in the face of our traditional understanding of the revolutionary potential women suffering from the "double burden" possess.

It is instructive to compare the 1979 28-page document, adopted by the SWP, with 1984's half page. It is not just the length which differentiates the two documents but also the tone. To select a single paragraph and then misrepresent it is to belie the totality of the earlier document. At a time when the capitalist class has thrown a sop to women in the figure of the Democratic vice-presidential candidate and thus acknowledged the inroads being made, by women and the women's movement, the most important thing the SWP can find to raise about women today is the specter of women's basic conservatism and susceptibility to fascism.

TURN TO THE WOMAN WORKER!

In the process of comparing these documents and past party statements on women, I took a look at the Transitional Program written by Trotsky in 1938. It is a very illuminating document and I commend it to Comrade Barnes et al if they have not already dumped it in the ashcan with the theory of permanent revolution. Trotsky said in The Transitional Program, "Turn to the woman worker!" With an exclamation point and a call to emblazon this slogan on the banner of the Fourth International. This is one of his final points and it was no afterthought. Trotsky has a reputation for being a brilliant writer who knew how to build an idea to a climax. Having described the basis for the problems which face our epoch, he points to those who are best able to respond to society's needs. He points to the youth -- who are not tired, who have fresh eyes for seeing what needs to be done and a fresh spirit that does not know what cannot be accomplished and therefore performs the unaccomplishable. And he points to women. The following is a quote from one of the final paragraphs of the Transitional Program:

"Opportunist organizations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the woman worker. The decay of capitalism, however, deals its heaviest blows to the woman as a wage-earner

and as a housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class, consequently among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness and readiness to sacrifice.

"Down with the bureaucracy and careerism! Open the road to the youth! Turn to the woman worker!"

This is a remarkable statement. Trotsky says we should turn to the woman worker because capitalism deals its heaviest blows against her as a wage-earner and as a housewife. He does not rail against her because she is backward, reactionary and unproletarian. Where Barnes and Co. state that "Blacks are an oppressed nationality and among the most exploited section of the working class" -- an idea inherited from Trotsky and incorporated in his theory of permanent revolution -- Trotsky, I am sure, would add that women are an oppressed sex and among the most exploited section of the working class. What the SWP has done is to counterpose women against Blacks -- or rather the importance of working in the women's movement as against working in the Black movement--in a totally false dichotomy.

Most remarkable of all, however, I am struck by Trotsky's statement that among the women workers the revolutionary movement will "find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness and readiness to sacrifice." It is this aspect of womankind which is currently being debated among the philosophers, historians, and theorists of the feminist movement. It is this aspect of women which is said to be the basis of the "gender gap." And let us be clear, Trotsky is definitely implying that this "devotion, selflessness and readiness to sacrifice" is a singular feature of women. If it were true of all workers, young and old, male and female, he would not have so remarked upon it.

Philosophers, moralists, and psychoanalytic theorists have traditionally held that women's moral sense is stunted. That women never achieve the levels of abstract thought that men do, and therefore their moral development is arrested at an inferior level. Carol Gilligan in her book In A Different Voice expresses the opinion that psychology has misunderstood women and their special view of what is important in life; that developmental theories have been built on observations of men's lives and that this has been taken as the norm, instead of understanding that

it is not a question of one being superior or inferior, but that each is different. She does not idealize women or the way in which morality is achieved in either sex, but points out that morality is a learned and social determination. Men and women are raised differently, taught differently, have different experiences, and look at life differently. These differences do not hold for each and every member of the male or female sex, but are generally characteristic. They are "gender" oriented. Women are thus seen to care more about social relationships and fairness. Men are seen to be more interested in rules and achievement. It is in this framework that one should examine the so-called electoral gender gap. For interestingly, the gender gap does not manifest itself over issues which would seem to be of primary concern to women: abortion and the ERA, for instance. Men and women are found to correspond in the percentages favoring or opposing these issues. The great gap comes most strikingly on war-and-peace issues. Women have been more opposed to U.S. involvement in World War I, World War II, Korea, Southeast Asia, and now in Central America.

A 1972 speech by Betsey Stone, printed in Pathfinder's Feminism and Socialism titled "Women and Political Power," developed a program which called on women to organize mass actions around issues. In contrast to the exaggerations about electoralism which suffuse the 1984 resolution, Stone presented a very rational approach to the meaning elections have for most people. "At this time, it is clear that most women in-

involved in the women's movement will in fact vote for the Democrats or Republicans, or not vote at all. It will take time, and experience in the struggle, before large numbers of women are radicalized to the point where they begin to break from the capitalist parties. So, it is crucial, in the meantime, that we maintain the unity of the women's movement in action as much as possible, despite the illusions that still exist about the two-party system.

"Through a united mass movement we can continue to fight for basic feminist demands, even though we may disagree about what to do in the elections. As a matter of fact, the election period is a particularly good time to do this, because it is a time when the attention of the country is directed to political questions." (page 37)

In an article in the Nov. 30, 1984 Militant, Pat Grogan writes of the current attack on legalized abortion. There is a picture of a 1970 demonstration, but aside from this there is not one word about the organizing of mass actions or of WONAAC (Women's National Abortion Action Coalition) which was instrumental in organizing women throughout the country on this issue. There is paragraph after paragraph concerning the present "ideological offensive" against women's rights. And next week we are promised a look at some of the main arguments aimed against abortion rights. But nowhere is there even a suggestion for how to meet this attack. Nowhere is there a program for action. I would suggest that a crisis of revolutionary leadership also exists in the SWP.

"FACTIONAL SQUABBLES"

Seeing in the street a man squatting and gesturing strangely, Leon Tolstoy decided he was looking at a madman; on coming closer he was satisfied that the man was attending to necessary work -- sharpening a knife on a stone.

Lenin was fond of citing this example. The interminable discussions, factional squabbles, splits between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, arguments and splits inside the Bolshevik faction itself, seemed to the observer on the sidelines like the activities of maniacs. But the test of events proved that these people were attending to necessary work; the struggle was waged not over scholastic subtleties, as it seemed to the dilettantes, but over the most fundamental questions of the revolutionary movement.

--Leon Trotsky, Stalin, p. 162.

THIS PREPARATORY PERIOD

by Frank Lovell

The term "preparatory period" is widely used by SWP members these days. It usually refers to the present political situation in this country, but not always. Standing alone it conveys indefiniteness, vagueness. And on that account it can be (and often is) applied to radical politics, here and elsewhere. In this way it has acquired a double meaning: first as a general designation of the present "contradictory" political situation, a time of impending decisions and great historic events about to happen; and secondly, as a prescription for the perceived ills of the radical movement, a time for radicals to reevaluate their past and prepare themselves for the future. Thus the term provides a convenient way to summarize the position of the SWP on a wide range of topical questions. Most important, it also serves to avoid specific answers to direct questions posed by the class struggle today.

The popularity of this term in the SWP, where it has a special meaning not easily understood by other radicals or most people interested in working class politics, is one result of a series of jolting changes inside the party in recent years. Members are not permitted to discuss these changes outside the party, and inside only when authorized. Consequently, it is hard for SWP members to talk with their friends and shop mates about political developments, past or present.

AN EXCHANGE

An exchange between friends, one an activist in the Nicaraguan defense movement and the other a member of the SWP, might go like this:

Q: I haven't seen you for a long time. Maybe you can tell me why I don't see SWP members very often? Why is the SWP no longer active in our antiwar work?

A: Well, this is a preparatory period, you know.

Q: I know. What are you preparing?

A: The SWP is a revolutionary party. That is our starting point. The revolution is being prepared -- for the party and for our class. Right

now our class is under attack from the rulers in this country and will undergo great suffering which will condition it (us, all of us) to fight back. The party is preparing its institutions to receive the workers and direct the fightback struggles. We will then establish a workers' and farmers' government. This is what is being prepared. We must be clear about our goal. That is most important.

Q: Is this how big demonstrations against U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua and El Salvador will be organized?

A: Big demonstrations are a matter of timing. We cannot expect big demonstrations against the war until there are heavy U.S. troop casualties like in Vietnam, and the body bags are shipped back. This is what we must prepare for.

Q: But how? Our antiwar coalition meets tonight. Can you help us prepare our next demonstration?

A: Successful demonstrations must depend upon and look to the working class. U.S. imperialism attacks the workers and farmers here just like in Cuba, Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and everywhere. Of course the forms of the attack differ from country to country, but it is all part of the same process. The workers are learning this lesson. And this prepares them to fight back on all fronts.

Q: Will the workers join our demonstration if we can organize it for the spring?

A: That remains to be seen. There are still very few signs that the workers and their allies, in their great mass, are ready. We must watch this development very closely.

Q: How will we know when the workers and their allies are ready?

A: There will be no mistaking it. When the workers and farmers of this country move they will shake the world.

Q: Is that all?

A: That is all for now. We must take full advantage of this preparatory period and prepare our party insti-

tutions like the Bolsheviks did in Russia under Lenin's leadership team. We are studying Lenin and I have to go now.

INSIDE THE SWP

The general usage by SWP members of their currently favorite catch phrase, "this preparatory period," did not occur instantaneously. It began to be used in 1980 by insiders clustered around the Barnes-Waters-Sheppard-Jenness-Seigle "leadership team." That was about the time when they stopped talking about "the mass radicalization of the American working class," and turned for inspiration to "the new revolutionary leaderships in Nicaragua and Grenada." Since then they have concentrated all their attention on their campaign within the party and in the sections of the Fourth International to disassociate themselves from the "old Trotskyism" and lead the SWP to a merger with the Castroist political current, a project requiring the dismantling of the Fourth International. This is the content of their preparatory period, not yet fully revealed to the party membership.

Party members were informed during the 1984 preconvention discussion, and at the convention, that "preparatory period" really means an opportunity to get ready for future struggles, to acquire experience, and to learn from the revolutionary developments in Latin America and militant class actions in this country. If this were in fact and in practice what was involved it would be a better use of the term, closer to the way it has always been used in the past. But its real content is quite different.

One of the preconvention reports, "Political Priorities and Party Perspectives" by Mac Warren (Information Bulletin No. 2, May 1984), pretended to be specific. "There are real political developments . . . taking place in the framework of what we call a preparatory period, where preliminary battles are unfolding in which we are participating and learning," the report said. "This is a period in which our emphasis is using our propaganda to explain what is happening and how to advance the battles that are developing in the U.S. class struggle." The report, however, offered no examples of active participation by SWP members in these "battles that are developing." This is typical.

Another such report, "Building National Industrial Union Fractions, Electing Their Leaderships, and Or-

ganizing Plant-Gate Sales" by Craig Gannon, did contain a specific example along with the generalities: "While the ILGWU may currently organize only 3 percent of the garment workers in L.A., the future of the union depends on its ability to organize more of the garment industry," he said. "We have to have our eyes on that fight and our focus on building a fraction in the L.A. ILGWU. We want to be part of the fight of this union to hold on and expand in L.A.," he said. His closing words: "That's what it means to say we're going deeper into our class and reaching out more broadly. That's what flows from saying the industrial working class is at the center stage of U.S. politics. That's what it means to have our eyes set on strengthening the basic institutions of the turn -- the industrial fractions, the job committees, and the branch plant-gate sales."

This sounds good but there is nothing specific; no attempt by the party to lead or make concrete proposals for any current struggles. What is the SWP doing today "to advance the battles that are developing in the U.S. class struggle"? How will the garment industry in Los Angeles be organized? What are the party fractions doing to provide answers to these questions? There is no indication that the SWP leadership is aware of these questions, let alone the answers.

The 1984 Draft Political Resolution was finally adopted by the Political Committee and published for the information of SWP members (Information Bulletin No. 4, July 1984) scarcely two weeks before they were required to vote on it. Its sections on work in the mass movement referred only to future struggles, avoiding present problems. "The rulers' frontal assault on the industrial unions is preparing a new stage of working class struggle. Every social and political question -- imperialist war, Black liberation, women's rights, attacks on democratic freedoms -- is reflected more quickly and directly inside the industrial working class and the unions," says the resolution. Very true. Then it continues: "Within the new political framework, the working-class reaction to Washington's course toward full-scale war in Central America will produce further changes in the political life of the country." Here the present tense of the first statement, "every social and political question...is reflected," shifts to the future in the second half of the thought, i.e., "the working class reaction...will produce

further changes." This is an easy way of avoiding any consideration of what the present working class reaction is, and how the party ought to respond.

Fatalistic predictions such as this one cited here from the resolution -- working class reaction will produce further changes -- relate, in fact, to military and political preparations of the ruling class in this country. They provide no guidance (not even a suggestion) for the organizational and political preparation of the working class.

GENUINE PREPARATION

The current usage of the term "preparatory period" in the SWP (and nowhere else) is a distortion and misapplication of commonly used language. When stripped of its esoteric connotation this term is applicable to the present condition of the radical labor movement. In this sense the history of Marxism may be described as a period of preparation for socialism. There is nothing wrong with the term when used in connection with specific kinds of actions or plans for future actions.

Marx and Engels in 1847 began to prepare the working class for the overthrow of capitalism by revealing the economic laws of the system of commodity production. Lenin was preparing for the revolution in Russia when he formulated in 1903 his concept of the kind of working class party that would be needed. Trotsky was preparing the proletarian revolution when he began to develop, explain, and apply his theory of the permanent revolution.

The "Platform of the Communist Opposition," drafted by Cannon and Shachtman early in 1929, was devoted entirely to the preparatory tasks of the communist movement in this country at that time. They were then preoccupied with the mounting threats to the Russian revolution, from world imperialism and from the bureaucratic caste within. This forced them to pay close attention to other questions: the Stalinist revision of Leninism, the war danger and defense of the Soviet Union, the role of U.S. imperialism, the stage of working class radicalization in the U.S., the results of the 1928 presidential election, the level of class consciousness among workers in this country, a correct trade union policy for communists, and many other questions related to party building, youth work, the Black struggle, the farm crisis, party democracy, the broad radical movement of the time, etc.

After referring to the developing

working class radicalization and contrasting this with the historical political backwardness and low level of class consciousness in this country, the founders of American Trotskyism then said: "Upon this development is conditioned the coming period of struggles of the American workers and the necessity for the revolutionary party to understand it and prepare itself properly for it." (The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31, p. 94)

This way of preparing for coming struggles is the exact opposite of the distorted "preparatory period" concept used by supporters of the present-day SWP leadership. Members of the SWP will do well to return to the writings of Cannon for better understanding.

In 1938 when Trotsky and Cannon and other leaders of the SWP began the work of drafting the Transitional Program they were preparing the party and the world movement for the coming imperialist war, and they were also preparing the working class for the struggle against that war.

Trotsky said the draft program was not a complete program; it was only the first approximation. But it described the general tendency of political development in the whole world, because the pressures of imperialism are felt everywhere -- in the colonies, in the Soviet Union, as well as in the industrialized capitalist countries. He cautioned, however, that every country has its peculiar conditions "and real politics must begin with these peculiar conditions in each country and even in each part of the country."

The preparation for coming struggles consists of participating in the workers' struggles of today. That is the essence of transitional demands formulated by the revolutionary party at every stage of the preparatory period. "It is a program for action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution," Trotsky said. When he heard that SWP members in New York were "elaborating ways and means...to present the program to the masses," he said, "that is the best method our party can utilize."

This is good advice for SWP members today who are caught up in the "preparatory period" confusion. If they will study the Transitional Program and then "elaborate ways and means" to apply it in the unions and other mass organizations they will stand a better chance of organizing an effective struggle against U.S. military intervention in Central America.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS WITH BARNES AND SHEPPARD

by Naomi Allen

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on!

"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least -- at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same as 'I eat what I see'!"

Since its first issue in December 1983, the Bulletin IDOM has documented the programmatic changes that the central party leadership began to introduce--gradually at first and then more boldly--after the 1981 SWP convention. Because members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and others opposed these changes, they were harassed, slandered, and ultimately expelled from the party. The way this process was carried out strongly suggests that it was consciously planned well in advance of the 1981 convention; but so far the evolution of the thinking of the SWP majority leadership before that date has not been given much attention. Is there any evidence to substantiate such suspicions?

Two events that occurred in 1979 shed light on this question. Though it would have been impossible to know what they foretold at the time they occurred, we can now look back and clearly see in them the future evolution of the Barnes faction.

CONFUSION AT THE 1979 WORLD CONGRESS

The first of these two events was a debate that took place around a document entitled "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." This was a resolution introduced by a majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International at the 1979 World Congress. The document did not receive a final vote at the congress. Instead, it was given only a consultative, or indicative vote, and it is being reintroduced at the coming World Congress--this time for a final vote. The text is available as part of a special supple-

ment to Intercontinental Press published in 1980 and entitled 1979 World Congress of the Fourth International.

This document reaffirms the traditional positions of the Trotskyist movement on the fight for democratic rights under capitalism, the structure of democratic rights under a workers state, the role of the party, the assessment of Stalinism, defense of the workers state (including the deformed and degenerated workers states), political revolution, and other questions. It was written well after the Polish events of 1976, but before the 1980 rise of Solidarity. Nevertheless, some of it sounds like a description of what happened later in Poland. It was written in the context of a debate in the workers movement over socialist democracy and the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat, especially over the perennial question of democratic freedoms and the role of repression in workers states.

When Stalinism first arose in the 1920s, workers around the world identified it with communism in their enthusiasm for the Russian revolution. It took a whole historical period for the world's workers to see the repressive, anti-democratic aspect of Stalinism and to reject it in vast numbers. Unfortunately, in rejecting Stalinism they continued to identify it with communism and rejected both. This is precisely the problem revolutionists face in promoting socialism to workers--the foremost representatives of "socialism" run a system that the workers in the rest of the world want no part of. To this day, the greatest single obstacle to winning workers to a socialist perspective is the widespread conviction that even if it makes sense from an economic point of view, they would have fewer rights, less freedom, than under bourgeois democracy.

In the deformed and degenerated workers states, the repulsive undemocratic aspects of Stalinism foster all kinds of illusions in bourgeois democracy that are attractive to dissidents as well as to ordinary working people.

Not only the bourgeoisie but also reformists and Social Democrats promote

the illusion that the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a monolithic, one-party political system and suppression of democratic rights. They have been so successful that this is commonly assumed to be a fact in the United States and elsewhere. This discredits the idea of socialism among workers. The Stalinists also agree with this idea of monolithism, but they do so for the purpose of justifying the status quo in the USSR and the other degenerated or deformed workers states.

The Trotskyist movement is the only force that both wants and is able to tell the truth about workers democracy under socialism. As the socialist democracy resolution explains, this question has to be aggressively answered by revolutionists if the movement is to grow and revolutionary processes are to be advanced.

These basic ideas have never been controversial within the Fourth International. There was no reason, before the 1979 World Congress, to expect that there would be any controversy over them. The resolution was drafted by a commission of the United Secretariat that included a representative of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. But on the eve of the World Congress, the SWP announced that it would not support this document, which it had helped to draft. Instead it submitted a hastily written counterresolution entitled "Socialism and Democracy."

At the time the discussion was very confusing. The SWP document, which was introduced by a minority of the United Secretariat and which won a minority of the indicative vote, contains many formulations that closely parallel those in the majority document. Whole columns from the majority resolution were pasted into the SWP resolution. The only way to figure out what exactly is different is to lay them out side by side with a red pencil. But even if this is done, it is not at all apparent, simply from reading the documents themselves, what the political differences were between the two lines.

To understand what was behind this development in 1979, we have to look at more than the two texts. The dispute over socialist democracy at the 1979 World Congress only makes sense if the programmatic changes that were openly declared after the 1981 SWP convention had already begun to develop in the minds of the central party leaders.

At the core of the SWP leadership's

new line is its programmatic adaptation to the theoretical weaknesses of the Castroist current on a world scale. As a consequence, they have felt compelled to reassess longstanding positions on workers democracy, political revolution in the degenerated and deformed workers states--and by extension to revise the history of Leninist policy on inner-party democracy, political pluralism, withering away of the state, socialized property vs. state property, and eventually on the workers' and farmers' government, the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, permanent revolution, and the role of Trotsky in the Russian revolution.

In retrospect, this motion of the SWP leaders seems clear as early as the debate over socialist democracy in 1979. They were, even then, beginning to grow uneasy with traditional positions on multi-party democracy, freedom of factions and tendencies within the party, the importance of the revolutionary vanguard party in making a revolution and in constructing socialism, etc. They were hoping to rewrite party history on these questions in such a way that no one would notice the changes.

The main difference, therefore, between these two documents is one of emphasis. The SWP's resolution, for example, simply omits any discussion of guaranteeing democratic rights to pro-bourgeois tendencies or defenders of "objectively counterrevolutionary" ideology, while the majority resolution explicitly guarantees such rights, provided only that the proponents of this ideology do not take up arms against the new state power. The SWP's resolution says nothing about the one-party system, or the need to guarantee free speech and free press to opposition currents. It concentrates instead on a discussion of the fight for democratic rights and workers power under capitalism. It emphasizes the importance of measures to defend the workers state against attack, including disenfranchisement of the bourgeoisie. The Barnes leadership was beginning--as far back as 1979--to want to rationalize the non-withering away of Stalinist states. They hold that the main danger throughout the world is the threat of imperialist invasion, and that this danger overrides the concerns of workers democracy. The role of the Stalinist bureaucracy as an instrument of imperialism and as a conduit of bourgeois ideology and pressures is conveniently dropped since that notion would be abrasive to the Castroists.

A BEWILDERING EVENT AT PATHFINDER PRESS

"A large rose-tree stood near the entrance of the garden: the roses growing on it were white, but there were three gardeners at it, busily painting them red."

Some readers may think that it is making too much of these small differences in the socialist democracy discussion to see in it an anticipation of the big programmatic dispute that would break out later. But there is another event that occurred around the same time, and leaves no room for doubt.

The party leadership had already, by 1979, sketched for themselves the broad outlines of their new programmatic positions concerning permanent revolution and Trotsky's role in the Russian revolution. Yet they kept these a secret from the party and from the International for two more years--through the 1981 SWP national convention. Only after the convention, when the internal SWP discussion would be closed, and opponents of the new line could be bureaucratically silenced in the name of "preserving norms," did they commence their effort to openly change the party's historical program.

At the time that the SWP leadership was conducting its mysterious maneuvers around the socialist democracy resolutions I was part of the editorial staff of Pathfinder Press. As one of those working on the Trotsky publishing project I wrote an introduction for the second volume of the Challenge of the Left Opposition covering the years 1926-27, explaining the issues Trotsky dealt with in this period. After this introduction had already been set in type, laid out, and pasted up--ready to be photographed and printed--Jack Barnes and Barry Sheppard decided that they had to review it.

The result of their efforts is very revealing. However, unlike the two resolutions on socialist democracy, the documentary material is not readily available for review. For this reason I will devote the rest of this article simply to quotations from sections of this introduction--first as I originally wrote them, and then from the same passages with the editorial changes, deletions, etc. proposed by Barnes and Sheppard. (The actual final text was a re-

sult of a series of compromises between us.)

The proposed changes are completely consistent with the post-1981 line of Barnes and Sheppard on permanent revolution and workers democracy. In fact, they are only comprehensible if the central party leadership was already convinced of its new line--at least in the initial stages--when the discussions about this introduction took place.

EXAMPLE 1:

Original:

"Some of the questions that were explored in the democratic discussions within the Opposition were: . . . the 'democratic dictatorship' versus the dictatorship of the proletariat; . . ."

Barnes and Sheppard change:

"Some of the questions that were explored in the discussions within the Opposition were: . . . the corruption of Lenin's concept of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' into its opposite--the Menshevik 'two stage' theory; . . ."

Final compromise:

"Some of the questions that were explored in the discussions within the Opposition were: . . . the relation of Lenin's concept of 'democratic dictatorship' to the dictatorship of the proletariat; . . ."

EXAMPLE 2:

Original:

"And they [Stalin and Bukharin] invoked Lenin to give the aura of orthodoxy to their theory [that the Chinese revolution was bourgeois]: in 1905 he had urged socialists in Russia to aim at a 'democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants,' not at a proletarian dictatorship. They neglected to mention that Lenin had emphasized that the bourgeois revolution could win in Russia only under the leadership of the workers, against the liberal bourgeoisie; and they also omitted the fact that in 1917 Lenin had altered his conception to accord with Trotsky's view that the working class would have to not only lead the bourgeois-democratic fight against Tsarism but also, at the same time, take power and carry out socialist measures."

Barnes and Sheppard change:

"And they invoked Lenin to give the aura of orthodoxy to their theory: in 1905 he had urged socialists in Russia to aim at a 'democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants,' on the road to a proletarian dictatorship. They neglected to mention that Lenin had emphasized that the bourgeois revolution could win in Russia only under the leadership of the workers, against the liberal bourgeoisie; and they also omitted the fact that in 1917 Lenin and Trotsky agreed that a situation of dual power appeared with the February overthrow of the Tsar, and that the task was for the workers through their soviets to take power and, in alliance with the peasantry, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat."

EXAMPLE 3:

Original:

"One of the most persistent accusations against the Opposition was that it was working for the formation of a second party. There was no truth whatever in this charge. Nothing in Bolshevik theory, tradition, or ideology had demanded or favored a one-party system, and the Bolshevik monopoly of political power was the product of civil war conditions rather than the application of a one-party principle. Originally an instrument of Soviet self-defense, it was turned into something quite different by the Stalinist apparatus. After the civil war, the death of Lenin, and the growing isolation of the CP from the masses, the existence of the one-party system was taken for granted by all the factions in the party leadership. Stalin sought to imbue it with the aura of Leninist orthodoxy, demanding its reaffirmation as the premise of every political act, and wielding it as a weapon against any who would challenge the bureaucracy's domination of the single party. Trotsky did not see any alternative to a one-party

system in the conditions of the 1920s; when he objected to the second-party charge, it was not only for tactical reasons but also because he thought attempts to build a second party would be harmful to the revolutionary objectives of the Left Opposition."

Barnes and Sheppard change:

"One of the most persistent accusations against the Opposition was that it was working for the formation of a separate party from the Communist Party. When Trotsky objected to the charge, it was not only for tactical reasons but also because he thought attempts to build an alternative party would be harmful to the revolutionary objectives of the Left Opposition."

EXAMPLE 4:

Original:

"That is why Trotsky did not call for the formation of a second party until 1933, when he decided that the Soviet CP was dead for the purposes of revolutionary action, and why he did not advocate legalizing all non-Soviet parties until after that. There can be no doubt, however, that the Bolshevik monopoly of political power aggravated the conditions that led to the degeneration of the party; the outlawing of other political parties meant that the wealthy peasant, the private trader, the economic specialist, the bourgeois intellectual--in addition to former Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries--sought expression within the only legal party in existence and added to the pressure of nonproletarian class forces upon the party."

Barnes and Sheppard change:

"That is why Trotsky did not call for the formation of a new party until 1933, when he decided that the Soviet CP was dead--irreformable--for the purposes of revolutionary action."

Editors:

Considering the fact that F.I.T. members and sympathizers were barred from the SWP's national convention in August, you did a pretty good job in your reports about the convention and preconvention discussion. But there was one aspect you overlooked, important enough to mention even now.

At this convention, and for a few months before it, the SWP leadership came to a conclusion about a question they have been tormented by for the last three years, especially since the Stalinist crackdown on the Polish workers in December 1981. The question was: what should their attitude ("stance") to Stalinism be now that they have discarded the theory of permanent revolution and have distanced themselves from Trotskyism?

There was a lack of agreement and a lack of certainty over what to say about Stalinism. The members were not aware of the fact that the leadership was unable to reach a decision on this for a couple of years; all the members saw was the outer form of the problem, that is, the ambiguity in the SWP press, the attempts to evade discussing it and taking a stand in public. I won't try to document this -- anybody can confirm it by reading the SWP press of the 1980s and comparing it with the way Stalinism was treated earlier.

The irresolution was not about their attitude to Trotskyism and Trotsky. They settled that at the end of 1982, when Jack Barnes gave his public talk to the YSA. The only grumbling about that in the leadership was from those who held that too much time had been lost before Barnes was ready to "tell it like it is." But in general the leadership was satisfied that they had rid themselves of the "Trotskyist" label which they found so embarrassing in relation to their Cuban orientation and had downgraded Trotsky to the level of an erratic revolutionary type like Zinoviev or Radek.

That, however, did not automatically indicate what they should say about Stalinism. Should they say their new orientation requires changes in the SWP's traditional analysis of Stalinism? Or should they say they continue to accept the analysis inherited from Trotsky and Cannon? This was argued back and forth, inside the closed circle of the leadership, for quite a while -- until the spring of 1984.

Then the decision was made, in a way that is becoming typical of the leadership. The membership was never let

into the discussion, and the policy decided on is not exactly clear-cut. The essence of it is that the leadership will again designate itself an opponent of Stalinism and attempt to convince everyone that it is merely continuing positions it always has had, while giving "Stalinism" a new content and definition different from those they had in the SWP before the 1980s.

At the August convention Mary-Alice Waters, speaking for the leadership, hailed Fidel Castro as the best and greatest anti-Stalinist in the world today; which is a way of saying something new about what the leadership means by Stalinism. Castro of course is not a Stalinist, and the specific policies he supports diverge from those of the Stalinists in many ways. But his non-Stalinism cannot be equated with anti-Stalinism because some of his policies converge with those of the Stalinists (support of the Polish Stalinist regime in its war against Solidarity, support of bourgeois-nationalist forces in the colonial world, etc.) and because ideologically he accepts the Kremlin's hegemony in the international working class movement.

You probably noticed some other signs of this decision. For example, how to designate Bernard Coard and his coup against the Bishop government in Grenada. The SWP leadership was anti-Coard as soon as the coup took place last October, but it wasn't until the spring of this year that all SWP articles and references to the subject started calling Coard and his faction "Stalinist."

Around the same time Steve Clark went to the Far East. For the past three years the SWP press has been implying that the Vietnamese CP is part of the great convergence of communist revolutionaries led by the Cubans and Nicaraguans. On Clark's return this notion was put to rest, and SWP members now are assured that the Vietnamese CP "has not broken with Stalinism" and, unlike the Castro current, lacks a "proletarian internationalist perspective." (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 38, No. 8, July 1984)

But don't conclude that the process of pouring new wine into old bottles is completed. When someone asked Waters at the August convention something about the policy of political revolution in degenerated or deformed workers states, she answered emphatically that this convention had not been called to discuss political revolution. So the "stance" toward political revolution (and how to redefine it) is still under discussion in the closed circle.

A former SWP member

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