

Information, Education, Discussion

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CHARTS REVOLUTIONARY ORIENTATION AND REJECTS EXPULSIONS FROM SWP

by Steve Bloom

The recently concluded World Congress of the Fourth International marks an important step in the building of our world party, and was a blow to the liquidationist faction organized by the Barnes leadership of the U.S. SWP. Delegates from 38 countries, representing all continents, met for ten days to discuss and decide a large variety of issues facing the Trotskyist movement on an international scale.

The next issue of the Bulletin IDOM will carry an overall balance sheet of the congress. The present article will only attempt to present a preliminary assessment on a number of the most important points.

* * *

Fourth Internationalists in the United States are, of course, intimately concerned with the position taken by the congress regarding the political purge of oppositionists from the U.S. SWP--a purge which resulted in the formation of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action. There was absolutely no ambiguity at the congress on this point. The delegates voted overwhelmingly to reject the purge, to demand the reintegration into the SWP of those who have been its victims, and to recognize all those who belong to F.I.T. and S.A. as full members of the Fourth International (to the extent this is compatible with reactionary U.S. legislation).

In this issue of the Bulletin IDOM we are printing the specific motions adopted by the congress on this question. It is clear that the delegates from around the world have spoken loudly and unambiguously to demand that the Barnes leadership reverse the disastrous organizational policies implemented by the Barnes leadership. It is now up to that leadership to show its dedication to the construction of a genuinely democratic centralist party in the United States, and its loyalty to the Fourth International, by carrying out the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the congress.

* * *

In addition to the question of the purge, and in many ways more important,

were the political questions which faced the delegates. The organizational crisis of the U.S. SWP did not occur in isolation. It was a direct result of the programmatic and theoretical revisions which the SWP leaders had been openly advocating since 1981. An absolute requirement for the congress was that it reaffirm the basic political principles of the world Trotskyist movement, while striving to develop our program in the context of important revolutionary developments in the world today. Significant strides were made toward this end.

Under agenda points on the present world situation, on "Permanent Revolution/Workers' and Farmers' Government," on Central America, on Poland, on "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Socialist Democracy," and on building the Fourth International, different points of view in our world movement were presented and discussed. Again, an overwhelming majority of the delegates rejected all proposals which would place a question mark over the basic historical program of Trotskyism.

This, however, was not done in a one-sided or schematic way. A basic theme of the congress was its recognition that present developments in the world--in particular in Central America and the Caribbean--are stimulating the development of genuinely revolutionary currents. These may not come from the same tradition as do present sections of the FI, but they are leading revolutionary struggles and arriving at some of the same conclusions. Reports approved by the congress recognized the need to discuss with such forces in a completely non-sectarian way, and to become part of the process in which they are involved--while at the same time maintaining our own historical perspectives and explaining how they can be an aid in understanding these revolutionary struggles.

* * *

The task of defending and extending our program, which was begun at the world congress, must now be developed and deepened. The revisionist tendencies remain part of the Fourth International.

The political pressures which have caused their disorientation have not ceased to bear down.

What lies ahead is a pursuit of the political discussion, which must be used as a rich educational tool both for the leadership and the ranks of the FI. Our entire world movement must be mobilized

for the final and decisive defeat of the Barnes faction's liquidationist challenge. The ability to effectively pursue this task will be an important test for the incoming leadership of the FI, as well as for the leadership of its component sections.

February 11, 1985

MOTIONS ADOPTED BY WORLD CONGRESS ON APPEALS FROM THE U.S.A.

1. Preliminary Procedural Motion

Whereas the World Congress has received a collective appeal from S.A. and a collective appeal from F.I.T. covering a total of 107 expulsions from the SWP, and

whereas it has been established that within the framework of these collective appeals, 89 individual appeals have already been rejected by the convention of the SWP at the same time as the collective appeals which it had received from S.A. and the F.I.T.,

the World Congress upholds the request of the expelled SWP members who have regrouped in Socialist Action (S.A.) and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (F.I.T.) to appeal their expulsions collectively.

The World Congress will therefore consider these appeals in the form of the two collective nominal appeals which have been addressed to it by S.A. and F.I.T.

2. Motions on the appeals of S.A. and F.I.T.

The World Congress upholds the collective appeal of the expelled SWP members now regrouped in S.A. and F.I.T.

Whereas these expulsions were carried out in bare-faced violation of the statutes of the Fourth International--of which the SWP is the fraternal organization in the U.S.A.--and whereas this political purge made a mockery of the rights of minorities inside the SWP,

the World Congress demands the collective reintegration of all the present members of S.A. and F.I.T. who were expelled from the SWP into SWP membership.

3. Motion on S.A. and F.I.T.

Whereas the new members of S.A. and

F.I.T., who are not expelled former members of the SWP or who resigned from it in relation with the expulsions, were recruited on the basis of the program of the Fourth International, and whereas they would have been members of the SWP if the latter had not carried out these unjust and undemocratic expulsions,

the World Congress supports the S.A. and F.I.T. request that all their members be collectively integrated into the SWP, with all the rights and duties stemming from the organizational norms of democratic centralism.

4. Motion on the individual expulsion of Eileen Gersh

Whereas Eileen Gersh was unjustly expelled from the SWP,

the World Congress upholds the appeal of Comrade Eileen Gersh and demands her reintegration into the SWP.

5. Motion on the organizational situation in the U.S.A.

Given the situation which has been created in the United States by the undemocratic expulsion from the SWP of those who opposed the orientation of its majority leadership,

and noting that, as a result, Fourth International adherents are now divided into three separate organizations when they should all be members of the fraternal section of the Fourth International in the United States, the SWP,

the World Congress rules that, as long as S.A. and F.I.T. are not collectively reintegrated into the SWP, the entire organized membership of S.A. and F.I.T. will be considered as full members of the Fourth International, with all the rights and duties prescribed by its statutes, and within the limitations imposed by reactionary U.S. legislation.

WORLD CONGRESS CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTESTS ON APRIL 20

SUPPORT APRIL 20 DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST U.S. WAR IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Statement of the February 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International

As the U.S. government deepens its aggression against the workers and peasants of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and throughout Central America and the Caribbean, a march on Washington, D.C., along with protest demonstrations in San Francisco and other cities has been called for April 20, 1985, by a broad array of forces in the United States.

The first demand of this demonstration is to stop the U.S. military intervention in Central America. Other demands call for a halt to U.S. support to the apartheid regime in South Africa, to the U.S. war budget and nuclear arms buildup, and to racism and unemployment.

Sponsors of the call already include trade unions such as the International Association of Machinists and the United Food and Commercial Workers; civil rights organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Operation PUSH, and League of United Latin American Citizens; the Rainbow Coalition, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador and other Central American solidari-

ty and antiwar groups; church and religious organizations, and many other social and political organizations. A nation-wide coalition has been set up to coordinate plans for the demonstration, as well as local coalitions in many cities.

Along with the many individuals and organizations who will participate in building this action, the April 20 demonstration offers special opportunities to draw the unions and organizations of oppressed nationalities, women, and working farmers into the fight against Washington's war against the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean.

The February 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International hails this initiative in the United States and encourages antiwar forces, Central America solidarity organizations, trade unions, all workers organizations and youth organizations in other countries to discuss holding solidarity actions on or around the April 19-22 antiwar activities in the United States.

ALL OUT FOR THE APRIL 20 ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATIONS!

by Bill Onasch

U.S. imperialism, having tasted blood in Grenada, is preparing to crush the workers and farmers government in Nicaragua and the revolutionary struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala. The outcome of this struggle in Central America will have an enormous impact on the class struggle throughout the world. That is why all supporters of self-determination, human rights, and workers democracy should join together to defend the revolutions in Central America. Contributing to this defense is the number one task of revolutionary Marxists in the United States today.

The objective conditions for building a mass movement in opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America are excellent. A substantial majority of the American people clearly and strongly oppose any Vietnam type adventure there and are in no mood for further sacrifices as corporate profits continue to soar. The ruling class has deep tactical divisions as to how to proceed. Washington's allies -- both imperialist and comprador -- are also quite cautious. The revolutionary forces in Central America enjoy tremendous sympathy among diverse strata throughout the world.

Unfortunately, subjective limitations have so far prevented the development of a national mass protest movement that can fully tap the potential created by these favorable factors. The anti-intervention movement is very uneven in its development and faces some critical turning points in the near future.

Although the organizational forms of the successful anti-Vietnam war movement can't simply be applied to today's situation, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency operates in continuity with the Socialist Workers Party's Vietnam-era class struggle methods of building opposition to imperialist intervention. Essential points of that continuity include:

1) A united front approach, centered on the specific issue of opposition to U.S. intervention, being very cautious about adding other issues that could divide the potential for mobilization.

2) The movement must center its demands on Washington, rejecting any U.S.

policies that cut across the right of self-determination of other nations.

3) The primary focus of the movement should be on organizing mass, peaceful, legal protests in the streets (though there is room for a variety of other activities as well).

4) The movement must be united by democratic, non-exclusionary coalitions, open to all who support the coalitions' actions.

5) The movement must make special efforts to involve those sectors of the population that can add the greatest social clout: organized labor, the oppressed nationalities, women, family farmers, and the proletarian ranks of the armed forces.

Much of this perspective eventually won hegemony in the anti-Vietnam war movement -- largely through the intervention of the SWP and numerous independents who worked closely with it. The effectiveness of this perspective was proven, building a movement that profoundly frightened the ruling class and contributing greatly to the eventual victory of the Vietnamese revolution.

Unfortunately, the revolutionary party -- the collective memory of our class -- has abandoned this perspective and, at least until quite recently, abstained from participation in the new anti-intervention movement. Instead of standing on the shoulders of the proud history of the past antiwar movement, today's opponents of intervention have had to build a movement from scratch, repeating the errors and debates of the early stages of the Vietnam movement. Bourgeois liberals, reformists, and Stalinists have been able to divert much of the movement's energies into class collaborationist projects such as support to Mondale. The lack of an effective mass protest movement has also led many impatient activists into the dead-end of civil-disobedience "resistance" activities.

THE CLEVELAND CONFERENCE

During the critical escalations of U.S. intervention in 1984 (mining of the harbors in Nicaragua, aerial bombardments of civilians in El Salvador,

etc.), the peace, disarmament, and solidarity organizations were so submerged in the Mondale campaign that they couldn't organize any effective national protests. This default led some of the independent forces who had been active in the Vietnam movement to initiate a call for the Emergency National Conference in Cleveland last September. Response to the call indicated that there were many forces throughout the country that were eager to build mass actions against U.S. intervention. Labor endorsement exceeded what anyone thought possible -- much broader than labor support for any anti-Vietnam war conference. Also significant was the endorsement of many local chapters of solidarity and peace groups indicating some dissatisfaction with the electoral preoccupation of their national leaders. The several hundred participants in the Cleveland conference overwhelmingly supported an action proposal for mass demonstrations in Washington, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in April 1985.

The conference stopped short of actually issuing a call for these actions. Conference participants recognized that the leaders of the traditional established peace and solidarity groups were not present in Cleveland. In fact, some of these leaders were opposed to the conference and even discouraged attendance by others. But some of them did send representatives to Cleveland who argued that a broad coalition was being put together to call mass national actions in the spring. The conference voted to collaborate with these forces

in this effort. A continuations committee was elected at Cleveland to work for the implementation of the action proposal adopted.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

In late September an invitation-only meeting of national organizations did meet and agree to build a Spring Mobilization for Peace and Justice. Unfortunately, valuable time and energy were squandered by this coalition over disputes around some important questions:

Exclusionary policies. Rather than opening up the spring coalition to all who were interested, its leaders adopted a policy of screening applicants on a case-by-case basis. They didn't want to be "flooded" by Central America groups. They rejected admitting local coalitions as voting members and excluded all political parties. Strong resistance delayed admitting the continuations committee of the Emergency National Conference and the People's Anti-War Mobilization. While eventually all applicants, except political parties, were allowed to affiliate, some important groups were prevented from having a voice in the early major decisions about the call for the actions.

Slogans. The leaders of the Spring Mobilization coalition appear to be more interested in promoting a broad political movement than a united front in opposition to U.S. intervention. The initial draft for the call didn't even mention Central America in the major

APRIL ACTIONS FOR PEACE, JOBS AND JUSTICE

NO INTER- VENTION

Stop U.S. military intervention in Central America. Support human freedom and dignity by also ending intervention in the Caribbean, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific and Europe.

BUILD A JUST SOCIETY

Create jobs; cut the military budget. Provide for human needs and challenge racism and discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation.

REVERSE THE ARMS RACE

Freeze and reverse the arms race beginning with a halt on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

OPPOSE APARTHEID/ END RACISM

Oppose U.S. government and corporate support for South African apartheid and overcome racism at home.

slogans. Amorphous formulations such as "Build a Just Society" and "Stand Up for Racial Justice," rather than clear demands addressed to Washington, permeate their approach.

The character of the actions. The Spring Mobilization Committee is presenting the mass march in Washington as just another event in a calendar of events, which includes local actions on "Tax Day," April 15, and lobbying, civil disobedience, and religious activities in Washington, sandwiched around the April 20 march.

ENTHUSIASTIC SENTIMENT

But the indecisiveness of some Washington leaders is being overcome by the enthusiastic sentiment for action around the country. In several important cities -- such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and the Twin Cities -- supporters of the Emergency National Conference have found eager collaborators in establishing healthy local coalitions to build for April 20. While not enough has been done so far to mobilize the local affiliates of the national sponsors, the local coalitions set up since the national call was finally printed in January indicate that there is still time to build effective mass actions on April 20.

Despite the intentions of some elements in the Washington steering committee, the main thrust of April 20 will be a powerful protest against U.S. intervention in Central America. Attempts to co-opt and capture this mass sentiment and divert it into a new political party, or pressure group within the Democratic Party, are doomed to failure. Last fall we saw the enormous efforts of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign in support of Mondale fail to deliver the votes of even a majority of Freeze supporters. Many Reagan voters not only support the Freeze; they voted against U.S. intervention in Central America in numerous state and local referenda on the ballot in 1984. Such people are not interested in a new "progressive" political party or pressure group but can be drawn into actions around non-intervention, disarmament, and opposition to apartheid.

While virtually all supporters of the major demands of the Spring Mobilization can unite in a mass, peaceful, legal march and rally, few will be interested, or able to engage, in lobbying, civil disobedience, and prayer as well. Local coalitions must make the

April 20 march and rally their main focus, leaving other activities to the smaller constituencies that are interested in them.

Over the next few months the F.I.T. will be defending the Central American revolutions in the following ways:

* By being among the best builders of the April 20 mobilization. This means pitching in on all the various organizational tasks -- such as obtaining en-

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dorsements, preparing publicity, raising funds, organizing transportation, etc.

* By participating, in a constructive way, in the debates and discussions within the movement over perspectives.

* By strengthening the current that emerged from the Cleveland Emergency National Conference. It is doubtful that the April Actions would have been called had the Cleveland conference not taken place. The "Cleveland current" has an indispensable role to play in forging a mass, non-exclusionary, anti-intervention movement.

* By collaborating with our co-thinkers throughout the Fourth International in building international protests against U.S. intervention. Important progress has already been made in Canada where revolutionary socialists have played a leading role in organizing Canadian solidarity demonstrations on April 20.

January 31, 1985

SWP DECIDES TO SUPPORT APRIL 20 ANTIWAR ACTIONS

by David Williams

The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party has made a shift. It has now decided to support and actively build the April 20 antiwar actions scheduled for Washington, D.C., and three West Coast cities. The front page of the January 18, 1985, issue of the Militant features a news article by Laura Garza on the plans for the demonstrations and an editorial calling on workers and all opponents of Washington's war plans to unite in action on April 20. This shift represents a big step forward for the Socialist Workers Party, a step which this writer and other contributors to the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism have been urging since the original call for an April mobilization was issued by the Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean in September 1984. The SWP's decision will greatly strengthen the anti-intervention movement; it also will greatly strengthen the SWP itself, and if the decision is generalized and extended into other areas of work it can be the first step towards correcting the party's erroneous course of the past several years.

CLEVELAND CONFERENCE AND SWP

Regular readers of our Bulletin will be familiar with the SWP's previous policies. Some review is in order, however, especially for the benefit of new readers, to show how important this change in policy is.

In July 1984 a call was issued for a conference of antiwar activists to plan actions against Washington's Central America war drive. Jerry Gordon, an international representative of the United Food and Commercial Workers in Cleveland, began the work, and by the time the call was issued, scores of individuals and organizations, a great many from the ranks of organized labor, had endorsed the call for the conference. Our Bulletin hailed this development and called on all those who opposed intervention in Central America to help make the conference a success. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency threw its small forces into the work.

The SWP's policy was confused at best. In Cleveland, the center of the organizing work and the site of the conference, SWP members attended planning meetings for a brief period. In most other cities the party abstained from activity. Party members all over the country began asking, "What is our attitude towards the 'Jerry Gordon conference'?" At the August 1984 convention of the SWP a workshop on the anti-intervention movement drew an overflow crowd. The Emergency National Conference was a prominent topic of discussion.

The workshop reporter, national co-chairperson Barry Sheppard, rejected participation in the work of the conference, calling it a narrow project of the "Jean Tussey family." (Jean Tussey is one of the SWP members who was undemocratically expelled in the January 1984 purge. She is a member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and a contributor to these pages.) Omari Musa, a leader of the Cleveland branch, took the floor at the workshop to downplay and belittle the conference. Instead of supporting the holding of the conference and whatever action program the conference would project, Sheppard counterposed organizing workers in unions where the SWP is active to travel to Nicaragua.

The SWP's "participation" in the Cleveland conference was disgraceful. As has been reported here previously, the SWP fraction -- which was fewer than 20 people -- made no contribution to the deliberations, abstained on all voting, and only intervened in the discussion on the last day, speaking to points which had either already been decided or were not going to be decided. Following the conference, the Militant published a scandalous report, calling the conference narrow and sectarian. Since the author of the report had attended the conference it could only be concluded that he had, in Jerry Gordon's words, taken "gross liberties with the truth."

A UNITED ANTI-INTERVENTION MOVEMENT

Other activists around the country took the Cleveland conference more seriously. The trade unionists who partici-

pated in the conference were not about to stop organizing against U.S. intervention because someone had branded their conference as "narrow." Furthermore, many who were not comfortable with the mass-action perspective which came out of the gathering in Cleveland took it quite seriously. Representatives of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) and of the Mobilization for Survival attended the Emergency National Conference, and central to the gathering's work was establishing unity in the anti-intervention movement. Jerry Gordon explained many times that there must be only one program of actions, supported by everyone, and that those in attendance in Cleveland were not trying to establish any kind of rival organization. The Cleveland conference called for actions in April, but voted to give the steering committee the authority to change the date in the interest of unity. Leslie Cagan, of the Mobilization for Survival, in turn assured conference participants that her organization, as part of a broad coalition of peace and justice groups, would support and build a mass demonstration in the spring, and called on representatives from the Emergency National Conference to attend meetings of that coalition.

The result has been the formation of a national coalition, called "April Actions for Peace, Jobs and Justice," which has brought together forces from labor, peace, solidarity, and religious groups, Black, Hispanic and women's organizations, and political tendencies. It has issued a call for four days of national protest in Washington from April 19 to 22. The mass demonstration proposed by the Emergency National Conference (now slated for April 20) is included in that call. This is precisely what the Emergency National Conference was trying to bring about: it was not trying to create a new coalition, but to get the organizing work started which would culminate in a mass mobilization of all those who want to see the United

States get out of Central America and stay out. It will be a united demonstration. What remains now is to build it.

For that reason the SWP's decision to support and build the spring action is welcome indeed. Both the anti-intervention movement and the SWP will benefit. SWP members know how to work, and some of the veteran party activists have a great deal of experience organizing demonstrations. The Militant and the SWP election campaigns can be important builders of the April 20 mobilization. Furthermore, the embattled revolutionaries of Central America need a unified movement in this country to come to their defense. As Marx and Engels said well over a century ago, "The Communists ... have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole," and furthermore, "...the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things."

This shift away from abstention from the antiwar movement can only be a big step forward for the SWP. Revolutionists have to participate in the mass movement as it exists, not as we would like it to exist; on the other hand, revolutionists have to try to convince participants in struggles to go in the most effective directions. The value of the revolutionary Marxist program isn't its theological correctness; its value is that it's a winning program, but it's of no use at all if it isn't carried into the mass movement by a revolutionary Marxist party. The art of party building is knowing the most effective means of communicating that program to other activists. The comrades of the SWP will learn a great deal about this in the course of building the April 20 action. They will gain important experience in the coming months. That experience can begin the process of correcting the programmatic errors of the SWP and putting the party back on the road of building a mass Trotskyist party in the United States.

January 26, 1985

**The Cuban Revolution,
The Castroist Current,
and the Fourth International**

Resolution of the International Executive Committee,
adopted May 1981

**Why We Oppose the
SWP's New Line
on Castroism**

by Steve Bloom

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WHAT ABSTENTIONISM USUALLY CONCEALS

by Dave Riehle

In a report adopted by the 32nd national convention of the Socialist Workers Party in August 1984 entitled "Polarization, Politicization, and Proletarianization" the reporter, Mac Warren, said:

"So when we think we see a way to make our work easier, we should think once, twice, three times, before we begin to change our perspective. Often we're seeking opportunities in places where there aren't any.

"But if we start with the reality, we can relax. We can relax and take advantage in a big way of the opportunities that do exist in the class struggle today. We don't have to get all uptight, chasing after this and chasing after that, trying to find a big breakthrough. If we do that we won't end up with a breakthrough, but with a bunch of revolutionaries having a breakdown.

"We just have to relax and think politically. This is a difficult job that no other political organization in this country is capable of doing." (SWP Information Bulletin, No. 5 in 1984, September 1984)

This soothing advice might seem more appropriate coming from Robert Young in a Sanka television commercial than from the national convention of an organization which aims to establish a workers and farmers government and abolish capitalism.

To those who knew the hard-driving Trotskyists of the SWP in the 1960s and 70s, the idea that the leadership of the SWP would convene its aggressive and energetic members to tell them to relax in 1984 and beyond must seem especially odd.

Nevertheless, this injunction to decaffeinate the party is not quoted out of context or counter to the general line of the report. In fact it is part

of a process -- hesitant and incomplete, to be sure -- of attempting to rationalize, with appropriate references to Marxist continuity, the actual practice of the SWP over the past several years as it has increasingly abstained from almost all organized external political activity other than propaganda campaigns.

This process naturally takes a more crude and direct form in a report such as this, which held a spot on the convention agenda that in the past would have been assigned to a Tasks and Perspectives report, laying out as concretely as possible the practical tasks projected by the convention for the next period.

Having virtually nothing to propose to the party cadre in terms of practical external political activity other than soliciting co-workers to take trips to Nicaragua, the reporter inevitably filled up his time with conditional and abstract phrases currently favored by the leadership and impressionistic analysis of current events.

Nevertheless, as a guide to the prevailing mood of the present party leadership and its attempt to rationalize its pessimism, the Warren report revealed quite a bit. What it, and the theoretical pieces accompanying it, have all failed to do, however, is establish any support in Marxist precedent for the leadership's policy of political abstention.

One cannot discount the possibility that the intense and vigorous study of Lenin's Collected Works inaugurated three years ago has uncovered a hitherto overlooked theme of: "Relax, don't get all uptight chasing after this and chasing after that." If this is the case, no one has as yet come forward with that information.

We do know, however, that abstentionist moods have manifested themselves before in small groups which have set out to radically transform existing conditions, and somehow lost confidence in their ability to affect the course of events. This phenomenon, like most others, did not escape the attention of the founders and teachers of our movement.

This article was completed just before the SWP announced its support of the antiwar demonstrations scheduled for April 20, discussed elsewhere in this issue in articles by Bill Onasch and David Williams. It still remains relevant, unfortunately, for the SWP's attitude to many areas of radical activity.

DAWDLING IN ONE PLACE

Trotsky said that at the base of sectarian moods "lies a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses as they are today. Preparing for the revolution means, to the sectarians, convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism. ... These sterile politicians ... simply dawdle in one place, satisfying themselves with a repetition of the selfsame meager abstractions. Political events are for them an occasion for comment but not for action." (The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution, Pathfinder Press, 1977, p. 148)

Frustrated by the seeming immutability of the status quo, the abstentionists pour their energy and creativity into reformulations of the old "meager abstractions." But one thing does not change -- political events remain occasions for comment, not action.

Marx and Engels fought abstentionism within the First International, especially the anarchist current led by Mikhail Bakunin. Marx saw Bakunin as a synthesis of communism and anarchism, combining the historic abstentionism preached to the workers by the petty bourgeois anarchists with the deep moods of discouragement generated within the International after the crushing of the Paris Commune in 1871. Europe entered into a prolonged period of capitalist reaction following the Commune's defeat, and the mass workers' movement did not revive until near the end of the century.

In the absence of any mass struggle, the sectarian currents within the International became so strong that Marx and Engels proposed moving its headquarters to Hoboken, New Jersey, essentially terminating its existence. Only with the formation of the Socialist (Second) International did it again become possible to create a viable international workers' organization.

Bakunin -- the anarchists' "pope," as Marx and Engels derisively referred to him -- alternated lurid incitements to violence with lofty anarchist generalities about freedom that had abstentionist conclusions, at least as applied to the organized workers' movement. Bakunin and Nechaev's "Revolutionary Catechism" said: "The revolutionary despises and hates present social morality in all its forms; all soft and enervating feelings of friendship, relationship, love, gratitude, even honor must be stifled in him by a cold passion for the revolutionary cause. ... Day and

night he must have one thought, one aim -- merciless destruction." (The Anarchists, James Joll, Little, Brown, and Co., 1964, p. 95)

Bakunin conveniently exempted himself from these marching orders, and lived a relatively placid existence in Western Europe, where his main base of support was among the watchmakers of the Swiss Jura, who worked as individual artisans in their isolated cottages.

"ETERNAL PRINCIPLES"

This anomalous combination of extreme political formulas with passive and abstentionist political activity is not so impractical as it sounds. Since the extreme "Eternal Principles," as Marx called them, are always beyond reach, and anything less is a betrayal of the sacred principles, those adhering to such a program grant themselves an exemption from disturbing their placid daily lives, while at the same time retaining moral and political superiority over their opponents.

Marx delineated the pretensions of the anarchists in an article published in 1873: "The working class should not form its own political party; it must not under any pretext engage in political actions, because fighting the state means recognizing the state: that's contrary to eternal principles. Workers should not go on strike because fighting for higher wages or trying to prevent their reduction means recognizing that wages exist. That's contrary to the eternal principles for the emancipation of the working class!

"If, during political struggle against the bourgeois state, the workers succeed only in obtaining concessions, they are compromising -- and that's contrary to eternal principles.

"All pacifist movements such as the ones which the English and American workers have the bad habit of getting involved in should be shunned.

"Workers should not involve themselves in the struggle for a legal limit to the number of work hours per day because this would then be a compromise with the bosses who could then exploit them ten to twelve hours a day instead of fourteen to sixteen hours a day. Nor should they bother to have child labor in the factories legally prohibited for children under ten because if they do this they are not preventing the exploitation of children over ten. In this way, there is once again a compromise which endangers the purity of the eternal principles!...

"In their everyday lives workers

should be the most humble of servants of the state, while protesting energetically in their own homes against its existence and showing it profound theoretical disdain by acquiring and reading literary treatises on the abolition of the state." ("The Three 'Eternal Principles' of Anarchism" by Karl Marx, translated in International Socialist Review, January 1971)

It is not so great a distance from this to the current conclusions of the SWP leaders that the anti-intervention movement should be shunned because the composition of its leadership is non-proletarian; that the trade union movement cannot be transformed, or even fruitfully participated in, because of the pernicious influence of the labor aristocracy and the leaders that express its interests; that referenda giving the masses an opportunity to express an opinion on an issue such as war and peace should be shunned because they aren't formulated acceptably; that the danger of "electoralist illusions" places a big question mark over participation in bourgeois elections; and especially that the workers can be transformed into a revolutionary class-for-itself simply by acquiring the literary treatises of the party at the factory gates.

These conclusions represent a deep mood of discouragement and disappointment on the part of the present party leaders, and a lack of confidence in their ability to affect the course of events, except as the self-evident truth of their views gradually dawns on the workers, as they study the Militant in the privacy of their own homes.

They console themselves, and the party members, with apocalyptic visions of great class battles led by themselves after the workers "leap ... to an understanding of independent political action." As Marx said, "all abstentionists call themselves revolutionaries, and even revolutionaries above all."

On the other hand, he said, "Revolution is the supreme political act -- he who desires it must also desire the means, the political action that prepares it, that gives the workers their education."

Unfortunately, the SWP leadership is on an increasingly divergent course from that recommended by Marx. They are increasingly repelled by "the means, the political action that prepares" the revolution. Their attention tends to turn more and more inward, since the ultimate object of their theoretical ruminations is to justify their own abstention. They do not seek new open-

ings for a revolutionary nucleus; they try to convince themselves that the ones they see are illusory. As Warren said, "Often we're seeking opportunities in places where there aren't any."

Failing to intervene in the movements of those who are actively opposing one aspect or another of bourgeois policy, they forego the opportunity to verify the Marxist program in action, and to more precisely shape it. This makes them more, not less, likely to be affected by bourgeois public opinion, having no other source of general information than the media, and the impressions of their own members, who are not encouraged to present views of the current situation that are contrary to those of the leadership.

GLOOMY PICTURE

When revolutionary opponents of bourgeois society are denied the opportunity to renew the party's confidence in the capacity of the working class through active participation in what Trotsky called "struggles for partial and transitional demands," the bourgeois pressures exerted on them are magnified. Reporter Warren used the word "pressure" seven times in the opening paragraphs of his summary: he characterizes the situation that faces socialists in the U.S. today as "difficult."

"It's difficult to construct a party that's capable of withstanding all the pressures that bear down on us in this bastion of world imperialism. ... We don't think we can put together a leadership that will be capable of doing the job needed in the future if we can't deal with the pressures we, along with the rest of our class, face right now.

... Bigger pressures will come down in the future. ... If you can't face up to what's developing in the class struggle today, there's no way you'll be able to stand up to the pressures of the future -- the pressure to change your program, the pressure to get out of the line of fire, the pressure to search for a way to make it easier to be a communist in capitalist America."

Undoubtedly this melange of dire warnings and prescriptions for relaxation has a dual purpose, even if not consciously intended. The full-time leadership, foreseeing no possibility of anything significant happening on the American political scene for some time, intends to relax and study the Marxist classics. However, the party rank and file face the difficult prospect of maintaining their enthusiasm for circulating the party press and sending in

generous financial contributions even when there are few tangible results from their work.

The leaders console the ranks with the prospect of a deus ex machina solution to this unpleasant vista. As Warren says: "Those fighters who go through combat, take a couple of steps forward, a couple of steps back, exhaust all kinds of political deadends" will then "make a leap towards political class consciousness."

"Only as workers learn through experience that these solutions don't work that a politicization process can begin to develop, leading them to an understanding of independent working class political action. The leap itself is what is key in this process."

Faith in this prospect, like most other millennial promises, becomes increasingly harder to maintain. It tends to diminish in inverse ratio, as Marx would say, to the amount of time since the promise was made. The number of people who can be gathered on the mountain top to wait for the end of the world gets smaller and smaller. The unfortunate confirmation of this is the continually shrinking party membership.

But Warren's gloomy picture of unremitting pressure on the faithful is hardly credible to those who see the sweep and potential of the movement against U.S. intervention in Central America and the growing conscious solidarity with the socialist revolution in Nicaragua.

Those revolutionaries who participate in the daily struggles of the organized workers see at first hand the deep changes developing in the consciousness of the workers, and the increasing opportunities in many cases for radicals to exert some meaningful leadership in action. Contrary to the lamentations of the SWP leaders it is still possible for revolutionaries to hold public meetings, publish freely, participate in elections, and openly hold office in the trade unions, to name just a few examples. In the real world the pressure on revolutionaries is not so excruciating as the SWP leaders paint it.

The SWP members undoubtedly have a better sense of this than the present leaders; in their great majority they joined the party because it was a highly motivated interventionist organization. Those who continue to view the SWP as a revolutionary organization must seek every avenue, no matter how modest, to reach the party members and help them to

Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua

by Paul Le Blanc

This study offers a detailed analysis of the dynamics of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua. Based on a variety of English-language sources and translations, it explores the socio-economic and historical background of the 1979 revolution and the political forces that were involved. It goes on to examine the advances, the problems, and the general trajectory of the Nicaraguan Revolution from July 1979 to September 1983.

Another purpose of this study is to test the value of the revolutionary theories of V.I. Lenin and L.D. Trotsky in light of the Nicaraguan experience. In particular, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is examined. At the same time, the distinctive contribution of the Sandinistas themselves to revolutionary theory is suggested.

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regain the revolutionary optimism that is their rightful heritage.

This is the antidote to the leadership's "Polarization, Politicization, and Proletarianization." If truth in packaging were applied here, a more accurate label would be "Prescription for Prolonged Passivity."

There is as yet no convincing reason to think the party members are ready to reconcile themselves to that dismal perspective.

WHY SWP SHOULD HAVE BACKED L.A. ANTIWAR REFERENDUM

by Evelyn Sell

Los Angeles residents have expressed their antiwar and anti-intervention sentiments clearly and consistently through rallies, marches, picketing, demonstrations, meetings, public opinion polls, conferences, the sanctuary movement for Central American refugees, and many other types of protest actions.

There was very little opportunity, however, to use the ballot box in last November's election to register a vote against "the policeman of the world" activities of the U.S. government. Both major capitalist party candidates for the presidency supported a military build-up and continuation of U.S. interventionist policies around the world. Most voters did not know about the few radical candidates on the ballot who called for an end to such policies. The Socialist Workers Party, which advanced an antiwar and anti-intervention program, did not even attempt to get on the ballot in 1984--a particularly striking change from previous years, especially since the SWP's presidential candidate was Californian Mel Mason who had gained statewide recognition when he ran as the party's candidate for governor in 1982 and who had resigned his seat as Seaside City Council member to head up the party's 1984 national ticket.

The ballot did provide one widely publicized opportunity for registering opposition to military spending, interventionism, and cutbacks in programs servicing human needs. This was Proposition X, the Jobs with Peace initiative. In order to gain ballot status, 68,913 valid signatures were required on petitions and this figure was surpassed despite a break-in and theft of 24,000 signatures from the Jobs with Peace campaign office. This was the first citizen-organized initiative to qualify for the Los Angeles ballot in 45 years.

The campaign was supported and carried out by an impressive coalition of unions, Blacks, Latinos, and peace groups. A key organizer explained in an article published in the January/February 1984 issue of the Jobs with Peace National Network Newsletter:

"Military contract dollars are pouring into Los Angeles County -- it receives more military contract money than any other county in the U.S. Los

Angeles is a major corporate headquarters for the arms industry. ... At the same time, Los Angeles County literally has had its industrial base ripped out -- 300 plants were closed in the past 2-1/2 years. The military-related jobs, however, cannot begin to make up for the lost jobs in the civilian economy. For example, a Ford assembly plant in Pico Rivera was closed down only to be purchased by Northrup to manufacture the Stealth bomber with less than 1/3 of the previous workforce.

"This 'job redistribution' has hit people of color particularly hard.... Los Angeles also is home to a large immigrant population. There are more Koreans, Mexicans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Hondurans and Nicaraguans in Los Angeles than in any city outside those countries.... The JWP policy statement and organizing strategy provides an excellent means for all these groups to link their individual concerns together."

That linking together resulted in a 61 per cent vote for the Jobs with Peace initiative. With this ballot box victory, Los Angeles joins other California cities who have approved similar measures (San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland, Berkeley) plus cities in the states of Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Los Angeles has the distinction of being the first city in the U.S. to mandate regular reports giving a breakdown on how many jobs could be created in local services, schools, and hospitals if military expenditures were diverted into those areas. As in other cities, Proposition X also mandates the City Council to publish the amount of federal taxes paid by residents and the portion which goes for military purposes.

The local L.A. Weekly, in a post-election article, pointed out that the Jobs with Peace initiative passed by a greater winning margin than Reagan achieved in California. "Why did the majority vote for Reagan and an initiative flatly contradictory to his policies?" the article asked and then answered, "Credit apparently goes to the thousand-plus volunteers who, with the backing of an unprecedented labor/civil rights/peace coalition, worked to get out the vote -- garnering 60 to 70 percent turn-

outs in mostly lower-income precincts where the turnout previously was 20 to 30 percent. The first returns, from an organized precinct in South Central L.A. [working class and oppressed minorities community--E.S.], were indicative of the total vote, 175 were 'yes' on Prop. X, 15 were 'no.' So while [Gov.] Howard Jarvis, George Deukmejian and Sen. Ross Johnson (R-La Habra) poured \$20 million into failed proposition campaigns that would have in effect cut out social services and campaign funding and given the GOP more legislative seats, Jobs with Peace achieved what was thought impossible -- with less than \$200,000."

The vote for Proposition X showed that large numbers of workers, Blacks, Latinos, and opponents of nuclear weapons and U.S. interventionism rejected major arguments put forward by the government, the Pentagon, and corporations: that war spending creates jobs, that "national security" necessitates more weapons and less social services.

The SWP interpreted the Jobs with Peace campaign entirely differently. In a post-election assessment published in the January 11 Militant, SWP congressional candidate Silvia Zapata attacked Proposition X and claimed it "was used to miseducate about what is needed to answer the real U.S. war threat in Central America and to divert activists into capitalist electoral politics." She based her criticisms on quotations from the proposition, a statement published in the official voter information pamphlet, and one article from the Los Angeles Times dated November 1, 1984.

Zapata totally ignored the literature distributed by the Jobs with Peace campaign in obtaining petition signatures and votes, the meetings held during the campaign, various statements by campaign leaders, other newspaper articles, and support statements from organizations backing Proposition X. A brief look at some of these materials and activities shows why the SWP should have called for a vote in favor of the proposition. Such support is in keeping with the method of the transitional program adopted by the SWP in 1938 and still -- officially -- a basic guide for dealing with referendums related to capitalist wars. The initiative process is a democratic right, won through struggles against the ruling class, which allows working people to utilize the electoral machinery in order to break the employers' monopoly of elections.

The purpose of the JWP initiative campaign was presented by Larry Frank in the article already quoted: "to educate

people about the relationships among military spending, cuts in social welfare programs, the increasing threat of war and the decreasing number of jobs." Jobs with Peace literature made those connections very effectively. One leaflet, for example, asked "Which Do You Choose? Unemployment With Missiles -- average number of jobs per one billion military dollars--20,000--or Jobs With Peace--average number of jobs per one billion non-military dollars--45,000." Concrete comparisons were presented: "\$1.7 billion would build one Trident nuclear submarine -- or -- Restore full funding for Food Stamps; \$400 million to develop the Pershing (first strike) missile -- or -- Restore cuts in health and education and training programs."

Zapata blasted Proposition X because "it calls for 'reducing' -- not eliminating--spending for military weapons." One week after printing this statement, the Militant urged participation in the April 20 mobilizations and listed--without comment or criticism--the four themes of the actions including "Create jobs, cut the military budget."

A September 16, 1984, article in the Los Angeles Times (completely ignored by Zapata) reported, "Initiative backers said they hope that the measure will...eventually result...in a 'conversion' of spending to non-military uses. They said they advocate a gradual shift away from defense spending to minimize the impact on workers employed by defense contractors. ... In the past, there have been conflicts between organized labor trying to protect defense jobs and peace activists attempting to shut down military operations. But at least on Proposition X, organized labor and the peace groups are on the same side."

A vital role in the initiative campaign was played by Southern California Unions for Jobs with Peace, a formation which includes: Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, California Joint Board; AFSCME (National, Locals 1108 and 2620); California Federation of Teachers (State body, Locals 1475 and 1521); Communication Workers of America; International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (National, Local 1111); ILGWU, Western Region; International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (National, California Joint Council); National Education Association (National, California Teachers Association); UAW (Local 645, District 65); United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (National, Local 1421); United Steel Workers of America.

A letter sent out to labor organi-

zations by Unions for Jobs with Peace, pointed out (underlining in original):

"L.A. County has the dubious distinction of having more military jobs than any county in the United States. We are working people and working people have to work. But we would prefer to work producing goods and services that are useful to our communities. As a result, we are helping to build a movement called 'Jobs with Peace, L.A.'s Campaign for National Security' to put our tax dollars back into the needs of our communities: housing, education, transportation, etc...."

While not singling out Central America and the Caribbean, Proposition X included opposition to "military aid to undemocratic governments known to violate human rights." In campaigning for the measure, backers gave special attention to Central America. Unions for Jobs with Peace, for example, hosted a meeting to hear Central American labor leaders: Marta Alicia Rivera from ANDES of El Salvador, Miguel Angel Albizures from CNUS of Guatemala, and Sebastian Castro from CST of Nicaragua. A brochure distributed by the Jobs with Peace campaign explained, "The Rapid Deployment Force is a 300,000-man unit trained expressly for intervention in third world countries. Two newly planned aircraft carriers are designed to support fighting in smaller nations like El Salvador and Nicaragua."

Zapata condemned Proposition X because it called for getting rid of "wasteful military programs." According to Zapata, "Reagan could agree with that. That only leaves money for 'non-wasteful' programs -- programs effective at advancing the interests of U.S. imperialism."

It is clear, both in the proposition itself and in support literature, that hitting at wasteful programs was part of an argument against giving the Pentagon and corporations a blank check for escalating aggression and profits at the expense of human needs. The ballot measure demanded that monies now spent for military purposes should instead go to "education, housing, health and human services, public transportation, the arts, rebuilding the civilian economy, and conversion of military jobs to peace-time production...."

Zapata used twisted logic to conclude that Proposition X called for military reductions down to 1980 levels, therefore, "In effect, it sanctions the massive military build-up, already begun under the Carter administration." In actuality, the first section of the measure calls for "reducing the amount

of our tax dollars spent on nuclear weapons, wasteful military programs, and military aid to undemocratic governments known to violate human rights." The second section mandates an annual report from the city council to be published in major local newspapers until the military budget is reduced to at least the 1980 level. The 1980 level refers only to the publication of the annual report -- and not to how far military cuts should go. As above quotations have shown, Jobs with Peace campaign literature supports the conversion of the military budget into expenditures to benefit working people and the needy.

Events before, during, and after the election prove how wrong Zapata was when she stated, "Probably the worst thing about this is that it drew some people who were genuinely concerned about doing something against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and El Salvador away from building independent actions and educating others about those countries."

Many independent protest actions and educational events were organized by supporters of Proposition X (such as CISPES) in the period leading up to the election. Immediately following the election, 800 picketed and rallied at the Federal Building to demand an end to U.S. military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean; this action was organized by individuals and groups who also supported Proposition X. Backers of the Jobs with Peace initiative are currently involved in organizing the April 20 mobilization in Los Angeles.

Zapata's attack against Proposition X was published for a special reason. She explained, "Since similar measures will probably continue to pop up, I think Militant readers will be interested in the main lessons we drew here."

The lessons drawn were wrong. The arguments were based on unwarranted assumptions. Facts were distorted or ignored in order to blast the initiative.

The real lesson that comes through, loud and clear, is that the SWP has increasingly isolated itself from the movements active in the struggle against war and U.S. interventionism. Scolding activists is employed instead of working alongside and educating them toward a deeper and wider consciousness. Now that the SWP has publicly endorsed the April 20 mobilizations, the party has the opportunity to drop its sidelines-critic role and be among the best builders of the actions -- in the same tradition as the SWP's crucial role in the movement against the war in Vietnam.

THE NUCLEAR FREEZE AND THE REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST MOVEMENT

(EXCERPTS FROM A 1982 REPORT)

by Frank Lovell

INTRODUCTION

When members of the Socialist Workers Party spoke at the final session of the September Cleveland Emergency Conference Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, the main question they chose to address was the Nuclear Freeze. This seemed bizarre to other conference participants. Not only was it completely unrelated to the issues which were on the conference agenda at that point, but the question of the Freeze had barely been mentioned during the entire weekend--except in the context that the people who were concerned with this question were obviously among the forces that should be involved in actions against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Grenada.

The reason the SWP fraction in Cleveland brought up the Freeze, however, had nothing to do with its objective importance for the gathering. Raising this issue was simply a device to try to discredit the Emergency Conference in the eyes of the party membership.

The Barnes leadership asserts that in this country today there is a great "petty-bourgeois" radical retreat into the arms of anti-communism and liberalism in the face of the imperialist war drive. This picture has little to do with reality--the sentiment against U.S. intervention in Central America today is very broad, and a significant layer has demonstrated its willingness to act to oppose the war--but it is useful for justifying the party's non-participation in all concrete manifestations of the antiwar movement from 1981 through 1984.

The Nuclear Freeze was given a key role in the party leadership's do-nothing rationalizations. The weaknesses of the Freeze proposition, and the illusions of millions of Americans about it, are very real phenomena. The proposal itself has no substance, and is supported by a wing of the Democratic Party because it would commit them to absolutely nothing. It preys upon, and in its turn feeds, the illusion that the American ruling class itself has cre-

ated -- of some inherent drive to war on the part of the USSR.

But the massive sentiment which has grown up in favor of the Freeze reflects the genuine desire on the part of the American people for peace and a world free of nuclear weapons. The big movement that developed around the ballot initiatives for the Freeze in 1982 has subsided, but the idea of the Freeze still influences a great many people, and sentiment for it is high.

The party leadership utilized the negative side of the Freeze development, ignoring its contradictory nature, in order to isolate the party membership from a real and developing antiwar movement. It declared that the Freeze movement was a completely reactionary development that was going to be sidetracked in an anti-communist direction because its proponents blamed the USSR equally with the United States for the "arms race." Since it was being pushed by a wing of the Democratic Party, they declared, it would further the working class's illusions in the two-party system. What's more, Marxists must stand for the unilateral disarmament of their own bourgeoisie, not "bilateral" schemes.

The conclusion was that genuine proletarian revolutionaries could have nothing to do with the Freeze campaign, and in fact could have nothing to do with any organization which would not disassociate itself from that campaign. Anyone who refused to denounce the Freeze in the way that the SWP did was declared to be capitulating to the war drive and caving in under the pressure of anti-communism.

In reality, of course, this included anyone who was not already a confirmed revolutionary Marxist, since it requires a high level of political consciousness not to have illusions in the Freeze proposal. Through such an approach, the SWP leadership simply discarded the basic strategy of the united front to defend the Central American revolution--which requires trying

to find agreement on that primary question while putting aside disagreements on other things, like the Freeze.

The SWP leadership used the illusions of masses of people in the Freeze to argue that they could not be reached to build a genuine anti-imperialist antiwar movement. This, it was declared, would never be done until the actual intervention, in a massive way, of U.S. troops. (This refrain was still repeated at the SWP convention in August 1984.) By thus counterposing the Freeze to any other antiwar or anti-intervention activities the SWP leadership was able to justify the party's isolation from developments which it could have related to.

Bringing up the Freeze in order to try to discredit the Cleveland conference, then, was simply a continuation of this approach. It was designed to influence not those attending the conference, but the membership of the SWP. If those who organized the conference did not jump up to denounce the Freeze as reactionary and anti-communist then this could be used demagogically inside the SWP to "prove" that there was nothing of value which could be built by such people.



A debate took place in the SWP over this approach to the Freeze when it was still in its formative stages--before the 1982 elections. At the August 1982 plenum of the SWP National Committee there were three counterposed reports presented on the subject. The specific topic concerned the SWP's position on the Freeze referendum--which was placed on the ballot in California as the result of an independent initiative--and the movement that had grown up around it. The actual text of the ballot referendum was:

THE CALIFORNIA INITIATIVE

"The people of the state of California, recognizing that the safety and security of the United States must be paramount in the concerns of the American people, and further recognizing that our national security is reduced, not increased, by the growing danger of nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union, which will result in millions of deaths of people in California and throughout the nation, do hereby urge that the government of the United States propose to the government of the Soviet Union that both countries

agree to immediately halt testing, production and further deployment of all nuclear weapons, missiles and delivery systems in a way that can be checked and verified by both sides."

The approach of the majority leadership was extremely hostile. At first, supporters of the majority in California argued that the party must actively oppose the Freeze, and explain to working people why they should vote against it. Some declared that we should go into the mass movement and demand that it take up the banner of complete unilateral disarmament by the U.S. Later, when it became clear that this approach was untenable and would completely isolate the party, the majority adopted a position which called for "not voting" on the referendum, and for vigorously explaining the SWP's opposition to the Freeze. Barry Sheppard was the reporter for this perspective at the plenum.

A second position in California was presented by Byron Ackerman. His report, which urged the party to give critical support to the Freeze proposal and advocate a "yes" vote in the referendum, was supported by the Trotskyist Tendency in the NC.

The Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the NC adopted a third position. It said that revolutionary Marxists could not give support to a proposition like the Freeze, and we should urge that people abstain on the vote. But we should not counterpose the Freeze to other activities. We should be friendly to the activists who had adopted this perspective, try to explain our views to them in a sympathetic way, participate in any coalitions that we could, and urge them to take on other tasks besides the Freeze referendum--such as building mass demonstrations to demand that the U.S. government stop producing nuclear weapons and stop supporting reactionary

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forces in Central America and the Caribbean.

The NC meeting where these reports were given followed closely after the gigantic June 12 demonstrations in New York and other cities. The pro-Freeze forces played a dominant role in organizing those actions, and tried to focus them around this specific question. But the demands and slogans raised by those

who marched that day covered the entire spectrum of antiwar and antinuclear issues, and linked them to other social problems. This set the backdrop around which the discussion took place in the SWP NC.

Excerpts from the F.I.C.'s report to the plenum on the Nuclear Freeze, given by Frank Lovell, are published here for the first time.



EXCERPTS

The discussion which all of us are now involved in has important aspects that we should now begin to sort out. What is the so-called Nuclear Freeze referendum, specifically the one in California? And what is the movement in support of the referendum? This movement is different from the referendum. What are we trying to accomplish in this movement?

These are not new elements. We've been working on this for a long time trying to sift them out, not only in the leadership bodies of the party, but in many of the branches [in cities] where propositions of this kind appear on the ballot.

Nearing the end of the discussion within the Political Bureau, and approaching this plenum, a series of motions came before the body. There's a motion by Lovell that was voted on at our July 24 meeting. This motion says that we make clear our opposition to the California Bilateral Freeze proposition, and urge abstention on the vote, that is, not casting either a yes or a no vote. That motion was voted down by the majority in the Political Bureau.

Instead, the majority caucus voted for two motions, similar to what is presented here to you today to vote on: first, that we concur with the general line of the California State Executive Committee as presented by Barry Sheppard in his letter of July 22, and secondly to concur in the position of "not voting," as our voting stance in the referendum at this time.

It is difficult to distinguish between my motion to abstain and the majority's "not voting" motion. The other motion by the majority on general line is very different from my understanding of the antiwar movement at this

time. I'll try and explain our differences.

First, the way we vote on the nuclear freeze: how do we vote when we go into the voting booth? And what do we say to others who are thinking about casting a ballot?

The California proposition is short and direct. You have a copy of it in your kits so I won't read it. It's only one paragraph. The key word is "urge." We urge, we voters urge the government of the United States and the government of the Soviet Union, that both countries agree to immediately halt testing, production, further deployment of all nuclear weapons, and so on; and that also they provide ways of checking and verifying by both sides. Now this sounds pretty good to lots of people. If we were in power in either country, either in the Soviet Union or in the United States, I think we would support such a proposal. If we were in power in the Soviet Union this would be a good political strategy for the government to adopt.

Well, we're not in power.

These if-then arguments don't have much applicability today. Reagan represents the United States government and U.S. imperialism. Brezhnev represents the Soviet bureaucracy. This proposition urges them, these two, to negotiate.

We don't think that either Reagan or his counterpart Brezhnev can represent the interests of working people; and we don't think anything beneficial to workers anywhere in the world will result from such negotiations by these two scoundrels.

We are not opposed to negotiations either, whether initiated by U.S. imperialism or by the Soviet bureaucracy. But when it comes to urging such nego-

tiations we abstain. We say working people in the United States and in the Soviet Union have more urgent problems. We can't find anything beneficial in these kinds of negotiations; and we think we can find for ourselves a better way to force this government to stop producing nuclear bombs and cut back on its present stockpile. That's our objective.

Now we come to the second part of this debate about the nuclear freeze in California: the antiwar movement, at its present stage. I think comrades in California were wise to separate what we do on the proposition, the ballot initiative, and what we do in relation to the movement. It's the needs of the movement that we must pay attention to. This is what ought to guide us in our relation to, and participation in, the antiwar movement in its present stage of development. What are the needs of this movement? This is a completely different matter from our refusal to support the bilateral nuclear disarmament proposal.

We must be clear on our opposition to it, I am convinced of that. If we fail in this then we are likely to follow others around and forget what we are supposed to be doing in the antiwar movement. But how we explain our positions is determined for us largely by the character of the movement in its present stage of development. I believe there are more differences of opinion about this among us here than has yet been expressed.

Our view of the combined antiwar-antinukes movement changed some as a result of the June 12 demonstration. Our comrades who were there in the streets selling Militants brought back the most enthusiastic stories that I have ever heard from any participation in an action of this kind, anywhere, at any time. What did it mean? What did it really mean?

I think it showed the extent of the radicalization in this country. The whole character of the crowd was completely friendly, as far as anybody could determine. I'm not saying there weren't a few unfriendly people there, but it didn't show up anywhere at our literature stands. Everybody, regardless of what his or her opinion was or why they were there, was friendly to our comrades. The vast majority certainly had very little agreement with our general political line.

It seems that anybody who had a gripe or grievance of any sort was there with a banner to display it. The demands were multiple. But certainly one of the

most common and the most popular demands of all, was "Jobs, Not War." That was a demand that everybody seemed able to agree upon. There's only one demand that nobody reported seeing. That was the demand for unilateral disarmament.

There was this one demand, however, that has this concept implicit in it. It's a very popular demand. The one I just mentioned: Jobs, Not War. That really means, in popular terms, unilateral disarmament, I believe.

Now, what does this tell us about how we must relate to the movement? First of all, we've got to get into it. We've got to become part of it. But how do we do that? I don't think this movement in California or anywhere else is primarily centered around the ballot initiative this year.

Of course, as the election approaches, and this proposal is more commonly discussed, interest in the ballot initiative naturally increases. But the initiative will be over in November. The antiwar movement certainly will continue. Let's look back now, and see what we could have done.

A lot of questions came up during the course of the discussions. What do we say to a petitioner who's out trying to get this proposition on the ballot? Well, what's the most natural thing to say? Of course I'll sign your petition, I'm in favor of the voters having the right to vote on nuclear freeze, whether bilateral or unilateral. That's not my concern at this point. I want to help you get this proposition on the ballot. Then the petitioner says will you vote for it. I don't know. I haven't studied it yet, but I'll meet you in a week or two and I'll let you know. And you study the proposition and you come back and say I'm not going to vote for it. Because I don't believe in urging Brezhnev and company or the Reagan gang or any of these people to negotiate in my interests. I don't delegate any authority to them, and I don't think the working people of this country or any other country should.

We think that if working people are going to have any effect here then they've got to participate in actions and we'll be there with you. Every day. Now, what do we do when we join these coalitions? Do we hang around the fringes of the movement and listen and see who's in favor of unilateral disarmament, who's in favor of bilateral disarmament ... and then make a choice? That's not participation at all.

No, the thing we've got to do is participate. And when you go into any

kind of coalition, you have to go in with what you represent, what you think should be done, and try to bring the others along with you.

In the coalitions of the kind that have developed, and the kind of demonstrations that have ensued, I think we would go and propose some slogans. "Out of El Salvador," "Hands Off Central America," "No More Nukes," "Jobs, Not War." Don't you think that would be a good thing for us to say? These are slogans, they're only slogans. But in our proposal for agitation, we can begin to concretize them.

Now, Barry gets his feet mixed up I think, especially in his letter of July 22 which I have to go by, and some of the content of which he repeated here in his remarks. He tells us first, that in the June 12 coalition we saw attempts to quash opposition to imperialism's real wars in the name of support of the bilateral freeze proposal. Maybe he saw that in the coalition in California. But we saw nothing like that in the massive actions that were organized by these coalitions. Nothing of the sort appeared anywhere in any of the big demonstrations that we watched and participated in where we sold our literature as never before.

Then Barry tells us that as things stand now a "yes" vote would not represent a setback for the working class.

I don't know how anybody could have the idea that a vote for the nuclear freeze would mark a setback for the working class. Of course it would not, any more than a big anti-Reagan vote for the Democratic Party, if you will, will mark a big setback for the class.

It won't mark any advance either, and that's the problem for us.

Finally, Barry seems to be worried, as he repeated here today, that the organizers of the bilateral freeze referendum and the Democratic Party will succeed by November in turning this campaign into a pro-Democratic Party, anti-Soviet Union campaign. For sure, the Democratic Party will benefit from this campaign. Does anybody doubt that for a single minute? As a matter of fact this is one of the purposes of the campaign on the part of the organizers of it. But if we learned anything from June 12, it certainly must be that this radicalizing working class will not be easily turned into an anti-Soviet flanking attack, or into an organized opposition to the Soviet Union.

The present antiwar movement, at its present level of development, is still rather amorphous. But as far as we

are able to learn, it has absolutely no anti-Soviet overtones to it. Nobody has demonstrated that; and there's no literature to back it up. We will regain our balance when we turn our attention to serious work in this antiwar movement as it now exists. Not as we hope it will become and not as we think it should have been, just as it exists right now. We are bound to learn more about it and that will help us too. I think the way to work in this movement, as in other mass movements, is to go into these organizations and coalitions with our own proposals and suggestions.

This means finding ways to work in these coalitions by making more concrete the slogans we are agreed upon, such as Jobs, Not War, and by avoiding a big fight to split these coalitions over the nuclear freeze issue. This is something we leave aside, to the extent that it's possible.

We think that the best way to concretize the Jobs, Not War slogan and other slogans of this kind is to propose a massive public works program to be financed with money that is now being spent to set off underground nuclear blasts, as happened last week, and to build more bombs.

That ought to attract some union support, especially now that the blue collar unemployment rate has reached 14.5 percent.

If we approach the movement this way, it would help build the nuclear disarmament movement by attracting union support of which there is a considerable amount right now, as was demonstrated on June 12. It will destroy some illusions in the Democratic Party too, I believe, because the Democratic Party, however much it talks about a public works program to rebuild the infrastructure of the industrial machine of this country, will do nothing to further that aim. That is really the task of the union movement in this country. And it can help too, this approach, in our own election campaigns if properly used by the SWP candidates.

So I propose now that we continue this discussion, and that our campaign initiatives, our candidates who are deeply involved in the campaign try something along the lines suggested here, so that we may begin to acquire a little more experience than we have up to now and see if when we come back after the elections we have different opinions and different ideas and a little bit better understanding of what these ballot initiatives amount to and how we can take advantage of them.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY WITH BRITISH MINERS

by Adam Shils

Why does the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism place such emphasis on the Fourth International? Article after article has talked about the need to defend the FI and its program, but what does this International actually do? In our last issue we described the FI's solidarity campaign with the Nicaraguan revolution. (See "Central America and the Fourth International" by David Williams, Bulletin IDOM, No. 15.) Now we want to look at what the FI has done in solidarity with the British coal miners' strike, which is in its eleventh month and has developed into the most important working class struggle in the capitalist world today.

In May 1984, the FI launched an international campaign in solidarity with the miners' strike. The campaign has three main objectives:

*to get the truth out at an international level about the miners' strike through the organization of speaking tours of miners and miners' wives.

*to raise material aid for the strikers and their families through initiatives of the sections, united front campaigns and through the official trade union and labor movement.

*to try to stop all coal bound for Britain through alerting the relevant unions in each country and waging a campaign within them for support of this kind. ("Fourth International Campaigns for the Miners." Steve Roberts. International Viewpoint, No. 66, December 24, 1984.)

This campaign has been a big success. Fourth Internationalists have helped organize speaking tours for miners and miners' wives in Belgium, France, West Germany, Portugal, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, the United States, Canada, and Australia. These tours have raised over \$30,000. Here are some of the highlights of international solidarity with the miners. Most of these actions have been organized by broad labor movement united

fronts, in which revolutionary Marxists have been fully involved.

Denmark. There are 125 miners support committees in Denmark. Fourth Internationalists helped a national collection taken by the shop stewards' organization that raised over \$113,000. They also played a real role in the struggle to block scab coal being moved from Aarhus to Britain. Here, in collaboration with the dockers union, a vigorous campaign was waged to stop the ship Militence from taking coal to England.

Belgium. Dockers at the ports of Ghent, Antwerp, and Zeebrugge have agreed not to load extra shipments of coal. The Antwerp joint union committee has called for "practical solidarity" by Belgian port workers. Our Belgian comrades have produced leaflets giving names and precise information on ships carrying scab coal and also have organized workers' delegations to the Lancashire coal fields.

France. The Mitterrand government is helping Thatcher by supplying coal to Britain. One thousand tons of this scab coal was poured onto the railroad tracks by militant French miners in Calais on November 24, 1984. Similar actions have taken place in Gardanne and Miramas. The CGT (CP-dominated union) has been heavily involved in support work. In November a convoy of 22 trucks and scores of cars, over a mile long, brought 400 tons of food and \$67,000 for the British miners. The French section of the FI has organized tours for miners from the Bold mine in Lancashire to meet French miners. A British miner, Colin Lenton, was one of the main speakers at a rally of 3,000 that the LCR organized "Against Austerity and Capitalist Europe" in May.

Germany. The German section of the FI organized a special tour for a miner's wife and a woman activist from the Greenham Common peace movement. The 16 Metall union has organized a fund drive to raise money for the miners. This will be an important focus of miners' support work in Germany.

Such a list of demonstrations, meetings, collections, and boycotts could go on for pages. The point, however, is clear: the FI is fully involved in the growing movement to support the British miners' strike. One aspect of the FI's campaign does deserve special attention. The Polish-language Inprekor has published two dossiers on the miners' strike. Some of this material has been reprinted in Front Robotniczy, an underground bulletin in Poland. We also publicized throughout the world the positions of full support and solidarity with the British miners taken by parts of Solidarnosc such as Front Robotniczy, the Robotnik journal (produced by the Inter-Factory Workers Committee of Solidarnosc in the Warsaw Region) and by the Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarnosc in the Region of Upper Silesia.

The FI is making a real contribution to proletarian internationalism by simultaneously explaining to the Polish workers vanguard the stakes involved in the British miners' strike and by explaining to the Western labor movement the development of many Solidarnosc militants' thinking.

All this international support work obviously goes hand-in-hand with the daily immersion in the strike of supporters of Socialist Action, a revolutionary Marxist newspaper, in the British Labour Party. These activists have

been centrally involved in strike support work from the first day of the strike. This has led to an increase in revolutionary socialist ideas amongst miners. An evidence of this was the 300 strong international support conference held in Lancashire by the supporters of Socialist Action. A number of young miners have joined Socialist Action's fight in the Labour Party saying that they have seen the need for internationalism in practice through the miners' strike and the international support campaign.

This, then, is the reality of the FI: an international organization capable of forming united fronts that can bring into action significant labor movement forces, an international organization involved up to its elbows in strike solidarity work, an international organization that brings together experiences of militants from different sectors of the world revolution and that is winning young British miners to revolutionary socialism.

Socialist Workers Party members should ponder this reality when they hear the latest slanders from the party leadership that the FI is a "small group of European intellectuals" who "have turned their backs on the industrial working class."

You can support the strikers and their families by sending checks to: The Notts Central Strike Fund, c/o AUEW, 218 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, England.

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PROBLEMS OF THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

"Intercontinental Press" Doesn't See or Want to See Them

by David Williams

The Palestinian National Congress held its 17th session in November 1984. The meeting was held in Amman, Jordan, from which the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) forces had been expelled after a bloody massacre in 1970. The PLO has suffered many serious defeats since then, the most recent in Lebanon in 1982. Those defeats have exacerbated differences in perspective within the PLO, differences which led to the boycott of this PNC session by two of the three major PLO factions. To date, none of the three factions has developed an analysis which examines the root causes of the defeats the Palestinian resistance struggle has suffered since 1970.

Unfortunately, Steve Craine, writing in the December 24, 1984, Intercontinental Press, has added to the confusion, rather than to the clarification, of the issues facing the Arab struggle against Israel. His report represents an essentially uncritical endorsement of the Yassir Arafat leadership, which has been rejected even by some of Arafat's closest associates over the years. While there may be merit in the argument that none of Arafat's opponents represent a qualitatively better leadership, and while Arafat's personal courage and dedication to the Palestinian struggle is unquestioned, it does the Palestinian struggle no service to ignore the serious deficiencies in the PLO's program and course of action.

POTENTIAL OF THE STRUGGLE

Craine points out the widespread interest among Palestinians in the refugee camps, in towns in the occupied territories and within Israel itself, in the deliberations of the congress, which was broadcast live on Jordanian television. He quotes the New York Times report that "everyone was home watching the P.N.C. Arabs who work in Israeli factories say some people there were arguing and discussing what our people want." Further, he reports pro-PLO demonstrations held in many locations with-

in Israel and the occupied territories, some of which were fired upon by Israeli troops. The PLO, however, has failed to organize this mass support for the struggle against Zionism, limiting itself to the military aspect. The members of the SWP majority have no excuse for failing to recognize this weakness.

In its focus on the logistical considerations of a military struggle, the PLO has had to concentrate much more on relations with the Arab states and other potential suppliers of arms and bases than on organizing its own people. However, the demonstrations of the Arab students in Israel have done significant damage to the Zionist state. The development of forces such as the Peace Now movement, while it does not represent a break from Zionism, does represent a weakening of Zionist ideology and a breakdown of anti-Arab unity among Israeli Jews. It has been a direct result of the activity of Palestinian Arabs within Israel and the occupied territories. The response of the Zionist state has exposed the true nature of Israel -- as a colonial-settler state of the same type as South Africa. Israel is today universally seen as a right-wing, pro-imperialist state, even by those who support "Israel's right to exist."

It is unquestionably true that there will be no liberation of Palestine without the force of arms, and furthermore, armed self-defense of the Palestinian Arabs is absolutely necessary, not in the dim and distant future, but right now. There is tremendous mass support for the PLO among the Arab masses, as has been demonstrated by the events around the PNC. The issue facing the leadership of the PLO is how to bring the two aspects of the struggle together. The PLO leadership has never understood that armed struggle is a tactic -- applicable in some situations but not in all. They have not learned the lesson that even a war may be decided off the battlefield, which the Vietnamese understood and used to defeat the most powerful military force which has ever existed on earth.

THE CLASS QUESTION IN THE ARAB EAST

Craine attributes the cause of the rift within the PLO to "the issue of relations with the Arab regimes." This is true only on the immediate surface. The National Alliance, based around the Syrian Baathist as-Saiga, the Qaddafi-oriented Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and some of Arafat's former collaborators in al-Fateh, is manipulated by Syria and Libya. The Arafat faction accuses them of being agents of Damascus and Tripoli in the attempt of those states to take over the PLO, and raised the slogan "No tutelage" at the PNC against this attempt. Furthermore, the National Alliance, with Syrian and Libyan backing, took up arms against the Arafat faction. Ultimately, only Israel and its imperialist backers benefited from that course of action.

However, the Democratic Alliance, made up of forces which openly call for socialism, is not allied openly with any Arab capital, nor did it participate in the armed mutiny of 1983. It has, furthermore, worked actively for the unity of the PLO, as Craine reports. Craine does not at all report what issues divide the Democratic Alliance from the Arafat leadership, beyond criticism of Arafat's negotiations with Egypt and Jordan.

In fact, Arafat's negotiations with Egypt and Jordan are a symptom of what is wrong with his leadership. Arafat's independence from any single Arab state is not the same as independence from the class on which those Arab states are based. The relationship between the PLO and the bourgeois Arab regimes is more complex than Craine presents it.

The balkanized Arab nation -- and the Palestinian component of it -- is divided along class lines, as is the rest of this world. The Arafat leadership over the years has rejected the "tutelage" of any Arab state not on the basis of class, but because the Arab states were not "Palestinian." On the other hand, Arafat has tried over and over again to avoid any struggle against the bourgeois Arab states, calling it secondary to the struggle against Israel.

The reality has been that the PLO, including Arafat, has had to fight for its life against the bourgeois Arab states. The Arafat leadership has not, however, drawn any conclusions from its experiences.

The organizations of the Democratic Alliance have drawn the conclusion that

the bourgeois Arab regimes must be overthrown by the Arab revolution as must the Zionist state. However, they have no program of struggle beyond the military program. They, like the Arafat faction, have failed to direct the tremendous mass support for the PLO into revolutionary action.

A popular movement which is limited to the refugee camps and military bases is not nearly such a threat to the bourgeoisie as a mass movement based in the urban centers, a movement based on the working class and its allies with socialism as its conscious aim. It is this kind of movement which can bring about the victory of the Arab revolution, and it is this kind of movement that the bourgeois classes throughout the Arab world -- including the Palestinian bourgeois class -- fear. It must be acknowledged that Arafat has the support of the Palestinian bourgeoisie as well as the support of some of the more conservative Arab states -- such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Tunisia, and even Egypt. It must be acknowledged that though Arafat is a dedicated leader he is not a proletarian leader. The bourgeois nationalist ideology of the leadership has been a brake on the development of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as a revolutionary force in the Middle East. It is this point that Craine entirely misses.

WHICH WAY FORWARD?

The Palestinian struggle against Israel is revolutionary, and it would be the height of ultraleftism and sectarianism to reject its demands because they were not explicitly socialist. A proletarian leadership would understand that the demands of the struggle cannot be ahead of the consciousness of the masses of people. However, a proletarian leadership would not be limited in its strategies by a bourgeois nationalist ideology. It would not be afraid to organize workers in their factories as well as guerrilla fighters in the refugee camps. It would educate the workers and poor people on the program of socialism in the context of the fight against Israel. It would not put the need to get weapons from King Hussein or money from Kuwait ahead of the mobilization of the working masses. For, in fact, it is not Arafat's maneuvering which causes the Arab states to provide logistical support to the guerrilla movement -- it is, rather, the fear of what their own populations might do if

they fail to support the PLO. Arafat simply does not understand that.

In reality, neither does Craine, though he gives lip-service to the idea. Craine, and the SWP majority to which he belongs, have turned away from the perspective of building revolutionary parties throughout the world, adapting in many cases to leaderships of petty-bourgeois origin and ideology. There is nothing wrong with working with people like Arafat, especially when he has earned his leadership position in struggle over the years. However, that is no substitute for building a revolutionary Marxist party which can in turn earn its leadership position. Ultimately, Arafat's strategy is not a winning one. What is needed is a transitional strate-

gy, which will mobilize the Arab masses at their present level of consciousness and as the struggle continues bring them to a higher level -- to revolutionary-socialist consciousness. It serves no purpose to ignore the weaknesses of any leadership -- Arafat's or his opponents'. Why, after all, does the revolutionary world party -- the Fourth International -- exist if not to bring the experience and energy of revolutionists throughout the world to aid in the process of building revolutionary parties? The U.S. Socialist Workers Party has a big responsibility in this regard, and it is abdicating it. It's high time it remembered its responsibility and took it seriously again.

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REVOLUTIONARY THEORY AND METHOD

by Paul Le Blanc

The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development, The Theory of Permanent Revolution, by Michael Lowy. Verso, London, 1981, 242 pages, \$8.50. Distributed in the U.S. and Canada by Schocken Books.

In the summer of 1982, stacks of Michael Lowy's book The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development were on sale at the literature table of the Socialist Workers Party's educational conference in Oberlin, Ohio. The word went out that this book was the work that had to be "dealt with" by the party's leading theoretical "innovators." The "innovators" were in the process of changing icons and dogmas. Instead of Leon Trotsky, the figure to worship was Fidel Castro. Instead of the theory of permanent revolution, the dogma to enshrine was "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." The shift was from a "Leninist-Trotskyist" schematized tradition to a "Leninist-Castroist" schematized tradition. Neither Lenin nor Trotsky nor Castro would have felt comfortable with any of this, but that was beside the point.

Lowy's book, subtitled "The Theory of Permanent Revolution," provided a powerful critique, before the fact, of the "innovations" being instituted in the SWP. Unfortunately, there has yet to be a critical review of this challenging work in any of the SWP's publications. This is particularly regrettable because not only is Lowy's theoretical orientation quite different from that of today's SWP leaders, but his methodology is also of a profoundly different character. It is consistent with the approach outlined by Trotsky himself in 1923.

Trotsky denounced the distortion of Marxism in which "limits were fixed for the proletariat, flowing not from the course of the revolutionary struggle but from a mechanical pattern." He was especially critical of "functionary arrogance and bureaucratic cynicism" and of

Paul Le Blanc is the author of Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua, co-author (with Dianne Feeley and Tom Twiss) of Leon Trotsky and the Organizational Principles of the Revolutionary Party, both of which were published by the F.I.T., and co-author (with Dianne Feeley) of In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity, an answer to Jack Barnes' "Their Trotsky and Ours" which was published by Socialist Action.

demagogically "presenting one or another simplified solution to the difficulties of the hour," insisting that revolutionary Marxism can't "be reconciled with ideological superficiality and theoretical slovenliness." More than this, Trotsky stressed: "The simple appeal to tradition never decided anything. As a matter of fact, with each new task and at each new turn, it is not a question of searching in tradition and discovering there a nonexistent reply, but of profiting from all the experience of the party to find by oneself a new solution suitable to the situation and, by doing so, enriching tradition." For him, "the weapon of Marxist investigation must be constantly sharpened and applied. It is precisely in this that tradition consists, and not in the substitution of a formal reference or an accidental quotation." (Leon Trotsky, "The New Course," in The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25), Pathfinder Press, 1975, pp. 96-99)

Utilizing precisely such methodology, Michael Lowy provides a compelling contrast to the schematic approach of the current SWP leadership. He provides no less of a contrast, however, to many who would defend "Trotskyist orthodoxy" with a dogmatic and mechanistic methodology which has created problems in the Marxist movement for some time.

After the death of Frederick Engels in 1895, the world's most prominent Marxist theoretician was thought to be Karl Kautsky, often referred to as "the Pope of German Marxism." Yet in the German socialist movement and in the Second (Labor and Socialist) International he tended to propagate an interpretation of Marxist "orthodoxy" at variance with the open and critical approach described by Trotsky. Paul Frolich's splendid biography Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work (Monthly Review Press, 1972, p. 71) notes that in defending the Marxist program from reformism and revisionism, Kautsky offered merely "a pedantic examination..., a mere confrontation with the present, a defence of long-standing traditions." In contrast, Luxemburg was "a creative Marxist in her own right, without the need to appeal all the time to the authority of Marx and Engels. She had a strong grasp of the revolutionary nature of this world-view, much more so than

the German Marxists ... [and] showed an intellectual mastery of the historical process and a steady awareness of great upheavals to come, motivated by a tremendous will to revolutionary action."

Trotsky was another of the creative rebels who challenged the orthodoxy of the Second International's Marxism. His theory of permanent revolution flatly contradicted the conventional (but schematic) "Marxist" wisdom of Kautsky and George Plekhanov ("the father of Russian Marxism"). In less developed countries like Russia, according to the conventional wisdom, a distinct bourgeois-democratic revolution would have to clear the way for a period of capitalist economic development before it would be possible for the working class to make a socialist revolution. Michael Lowy begins his study with the following comments:

"The theory of permanent revolution, first formulated by Leon Trotsky in 1905-6, defines a theoretical field whose principal, dialectically linked problems are: (a) the possibility of proletarian revolution in 'backward' (underdeveloped, semi-feudal, pre-capitalist or pre-industrial) countries; (b) the uninterrupted transition from the democratic to socialist revolution, as so-called bourgeois-democratic tasks (national independence and unity, the emancipation of the peasantry, democratic enfranchisement, and so on) are undertaken by workers' power in ineluctable combination with specifically socialist tasks; (c) the international extension of the revolutionary process and the construction of socialism on a world scale. The formulation of this theory, and the new problematic it entailed, unquestionably signalled a bold and original break from the evolutionist Marxism of the Second International. At the same time, however, it initiated a controversy that persists to this day: does Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution represent a creative development of classical socialist theory, or is it, in fact, a heretical rupture with the fundamental principles of historical materialism as conceived by Marx?" (p. 1)

To come to grips with this problem, Lowy begins with an examination of conceptions of revolution in Marx's and Engels' thought from the 1840s to the 1890s. His conclusions and methodology are suggested when he writes: "Did the Kautskian orthodoxy of the Second International faithfully reproduce, as its grey-bearded leaders always insisted, the letter and the spirit of Marx's theory of socialist revolution; or did it flatten and distort its complex folds

and nuances? It is my opinion that a rigorous analysis of the writings of Marx and Engels, in fact, reveals a problematic far more complex and subtle, pregnant with ideas and hypotheses that offer a groundwork for the conception of permanent revolution as eventually theorized by Trotsky." (p. 3) Like Marx, Luxemburg, and Trotsky, Lowy approaches everything with a searching mind, attempting to relate texts to their historical contexts, trying to grasp the relationship of one idea to another in the evolving body of a revolutionary thinker's work, and remaining alive to the inevitable tensions within any revolutionary theory and between theory and living reality. This helps to situate Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution as, ultimately, being most in harmony with the dialectical and revolutionary essence of the Marxism of Marx and Engels.

Lowy applies the same methodology as he examines the relationship of Trotsky's theory to Russian realities of 1905-1917. Here he focuses on differences between Trotsky on the one hand and, on the other, Plekhanov and V.I. Lenin. While it might be argued that Lowy is too inclined to make short shrift of Plekhanov, he has too much respect for Lenin to oversimplify the complex and evolving thought of this leader of the Russian revolution. What he discovers and documents is that Lenin's conception of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry "reveals with extraordinary clarity the tension in Lenin's thought between his profound revolutionary realism and the limitations imposed by the straitjacket of so-called 'orthodox Marxism.'" Commenting on Lenin's Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution (1905), Lowy finds "an illuminating and penetrating analysis of the incapacity of the Russian bourgeoisie successfully to lead a democratic revolution, which, in fact, could be accomplished only by a worker-peasant front under proletarian hegemony. On the other hand, there are innumerable passages in the pamphlet that categorically insist on the exclusively bourgeois character of the revolution and condemn as 'reactionary' the idea of 'seeking salvation for the working class in anything save the further development of capitalism.'" (pp. 34-35)

Lowy presents a perceptive analysis of Trotsky's theory and of the methodology underlying it. He stresses the influence on Trotsky's education as a Marxist of the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Labriola, "perhaps the

least orthodox of the major theoretical figures of the Second International," who stressed the importance to Marxism of Hegel's dialectics, "rejected scholastic dogmatism and the talmudic cult of the textbook," and who wrote: "Marxism ... is not and cannot be confined to the writings of Marx and Engels. ... Since this doctrine is critical, it cannot be developed, applied and corrected except critically." (p. 46)

Trotsky's own creative application of Marxism to Russian realities was first fully articulated in 1905: "The revolutionary foreground is already occupied by the proletariat. Only the Social Democracy, acting through the workers, can make the peasantry follow its lead. This opens to the Russian Social Democracy the prospect of capturing the power before that can possibly take place in the countries of the west. The immediate task of the Social Democracy will be to bring the democratic revolution to completion. But once in control, the proletarian party will not be able to confine itself merely to the democratic program; it will be obliged to adopt socialist measures. How far it will go in that direction will depend not only on the correlation of forces in Russia itself, but on the entire international situation as well." (p. 45)

Although Lenin had rejected this perspective at the time, by 1917 his own outlook converged with it. "Over the last half-century," notes Lowy, "generations of Stalinist and 'post-Stalinist' ideologues have toiled to prove that Lenin's conceptions in 1917 had nothing in common with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, and that they were merely an 'amended and improved' version of the strategy he had formulated back in 1905." (p. 62) Yet such "laborious argumentation" is shown to have little merit. The evolution of Lenin's thought was affected by the eruption of World War I and by the failure of Second International "orthodoxy" to respond to this in a revolutionary manner. The evolution was reflected in his Philosophical Notebooks (1914-1916), in Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916), in The State and Revolution (1917), and most of all in his struggle for and leadership of the world's first socialist revolution.

In 1919, Trotsky was able to write -- without fear of contradiction from Lenin or any other Bolshevik -- a new preface to the re-issue of his 1906 exposition of permanent revolution, Results and Prospects, asserting: "The final test of a theory is experience. Irrefutable proof of our having correct-

ly applied Marxist theory is given by the fact that the events in which we are now participating, and even our methods of participation in them, were foreseen in their fundamental lines some fifteen years ago." (pp. 67-68)

After Lenin's death, as an authoritarian bureaucracy under Joseph Stalin began to consolidate its power -- politically dispossessing the working class and moving away from the revolutionary-internationalist program of Bolshevism -- Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution came under attack. A mechanistic version of Lenin's outmoded 1905 perspective of "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" was counterposed to it by Stalinist theoreticians (and applied, with disastrous results, to the Chinese revolution); the theory of "socialism in one country" was likewise advanced in the name of a bogus "Leninism." Trotsky at first defended his distinctive views, then wavered, but finally generalized the theory into a comprehensive perspective of world revolution. Lowy traces this evolution with insight and intelligence.

The theory of permanent revolution became a keystone for the program of the Fourth International, which Trotsky helped to organize as a revolutionary alternative after the Third (Communist) International underwent complete Stalinist degeneration. As the Second World War approached, Trotsky seemed confident about the prospects for tremendous growth of the Fourth International -- armed with a revolutionary program -- in a postwar revolutionary upheaval that might be even greater than that which occurred after the First World War.

"Contrary to Trotsky's expectations just before his death," Lowy points out, "the Second World War did not even produce a revolutionary wave in the industrial metropolises comparable to the one at the end of the First World War. But it nonetheless led to some very important results from the standpoint of the international class struggle." (p. 103) Lowy enumerates three of these results: 1) the expansion of the USSR's area of influence into Eastern Europe, where the Red Army, to some extent supported by local working-class activity, overturned capitalist regimes and imposed regimes similar to that of the USSR; 2) the development in Asia, Africa, and Latin America of powerful anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements, under bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leadership; and 3) the victory of what Lowy terms "authentic proletarian revolutions" in such countries as Yugoslavia, China, and Vietnam -- where

Communist parties had won hegemony over the anti-fascist resistance but at the same time proved willing (or felt compelled) to defy Stalin's pressures to compromise with the capitalists in the interests of post-war "peaceful co-existence." At the same time, "those forces that programmatically embraced Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution remained too small to compete as real alternatives in the eyes of the popular masses." (p. 189)

These postwar realities created a challenge to, and in some ways a crisis for, the world Trotskyist movement. We are still grappling with that today. It is within this framework that we can best understand the recent disorientation and trajectory of the Socialist Workers Party. While some have jettisoned crucial elements of the revolutionary program in order to adapt to Stalinist or imperialist pressures, however, others have made the opposite mistake of clinging to a dogmatized "orthodoxy" which they counterpose to living realities. Neither approach can be fruitful from a revolutionary standpoint. Only by utilizing the critical-minded methodology characteristic of Marx, Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky will it be possible to sharpen, enrich, and effectively apply the revolutionary program -- including the theory of permanent revolution.

This is the approach of Michael Lowy in the last half of his book. He seeks to test and refine the theory of permanent revolution (as Trotsky would have done) through a concrete and highly informative analysis of concrete events: the socialist revolutions which have occurred in backward capitalist countries (Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Cuba), and the unfinished bourgeois revolutions which have partially unfolded and then stalled in Mexico, Algeria, India, Venezuela, and Turkey. This is the most challenging and provocative section of the book, and not all who share Lowy's general orientation will agree with all of his conclusions. The book is particularly weakened by the author's failure to address the efforts of such Trotskyists as the late Joseph Hansen who have sought to deal with precisely the same problems by developing the "workers and farmers government" concept. (This omission is especially disappointing because of the current SWP leadership's cynical utilization of a distorted version of Hansen's theory to attack the theory of permanent revolution.) Nonetheless, Lowy performs a genuine service by confronting the tough

WHAT THE SWP SAID IN 1979

In the period of the 1905 revolution in Russia Lenin had raised the slogan of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry," by which he envisaged a revolutionary governmental alliance between the workers' parties and a mass peasant party. He distinguished such a regime from a socialist government by assuming that the peasant representatives would not approve of the expropriation of capitalist property and that such measures might be delayed for a long period of time after a workers' and peasants' government was established. Trotsky considered Lenin's theory to be wrong on two counts: (1) that it overestimated the ability of the peasants to create a mass party. Trotsky held instead that the peasants would be led either by the workers' parties or by the capitalist parties. (2) The capitalist class would never tolerate the rule of the workers' and peasants' government and their resistance would be of so fierce a character as to force the revolutionary regime to move early to the expropriation of capitalist property. It was this concept of the democratic revolution against tsarism being fused with the socialist revolution against capitalism that Trotsky called **permanent revolution**. The greatest problem with Lenin's theory of the "democratic dictatorship" was that it could be interpreted to justify support to a liberal capitalist government as a necessary first stage of a revolution. After the February revolution in Russia in 1917 and before Lenin's return from exile on April 3, the Bolshevik Party leadership in Russia appealed to the concept of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" as grounds for giving critical support to the capitalist Provisional Government. Lenin immediately after his return drafted "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," known as the **April Theses**, which abandoned the slogan of "democratic dictatorship" and adopted Trotsky's basic conclusion that the Russian revolution must lead to a workers' government committed to socialism. This was concretized in the slogan "All power to the Soviets." The day after the Bolshevik *Pravda* (Truth) published Lenin's theses calling for the overthrow of the Provisional Government, the Petrograd Committee of the Bolsheviks voted thirteen to two against them.

— Joseph Hansen, *The Leninist Strategy of Party Building*, Pathfinder Press (1979), footnote 142, pp. 563-4.

questions that all revolutionary Marxists of our time must deal with, and in a manner which yields valuable insights that greatly contribute to the process of enriching the theory of permanent revolution and of furthering programmatic clarity among revolutionaries.

Lowy succeeds in demonstrating the continued vibrancy and practical relevance of the theory of permanent revolution -- for example, in the illuminating comparison of the Nicaraguan and Iranian revolutions (pp. 202-204). He is able to do this because, far from offering a pedantic defense of traditional formulas, he has produced a critical-minded and creative Marxist study, one which deserves a place in any socialist library and which will be of benefit to every revolutionary activist.

UNDERSTANDING (AND MISUNDERSTANDING) THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

by Steve Bloom

The reason for the FSLN victory in Nicaragua's recent elections is clear and irrefutable: the Sandinista leadership represents the Nicaraguan workers and peasants. If anyone doubted that before, no one can legitimately do so now. The FSLN has won the allegiance of the masses because since it came to power in 1979 it has been engaged in a conscious effort to defend their interests against all others--in particular the Nicaraguan capitalists and imperialism--and it has, on the whole, succeeded in moving the revolution forward.

What has happened since 1979 in Nicaragua can only be characterized as a process of permanent revolution. A revolution made on the basis of elementary bourgeois-democratic demands for civil rights, justice, and independence from imperialist domination has been able to succeed in moving toward that goal only because the working class and the poor peasantry played a dominant role within the revolutionary process. These social forces have found a political leadership through which their rule has been consolidated. And in the process they have had not only to kick out the old ruling clique of Somoza and take on imperialism, but also to exercise their rule against the native Nicaraguan bourgeoisie -- which has recoiled even from consistently carrying out the bourgeois-democratic tasks.

This is not to say that they haven't made errors, or that there aren't severe problems in Nicaragua. But we have to understand the errors of the FSLN and the problems of the revolution in the context laid out above, or else we will lose our perspective. There are two opposite errors which can be made in this situation, and we can be sure that if two errors can be made, both of them will be. Let's take a look at the disorientation of various forces on this question of the Nicaraguan revolution.

SWP AND CAMEJO

The first error is the more important one for us, because it is being made by the present leadership of the Socialist Workers Party--a party that still claims the allegiance of the majority of those who were won to the U.S. Trotskyist movement over the past two decades and who remain politically active. The same error--though carried to an even greater extreme--is made by the forces who have grouped around Pedro Camejo, despite their other differences with the SWP.

Both the Barnes leadership of the SWP and Camejo reject the idea that what has taken place in Nicaragua represents a process of permanent revolution. They say it is more akin to what Lenin was describing in the pre-1917 formula which he counterposed to permanent revolution: "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." Because Nicaragua challenges permanent revolution, the SWP leadership says, those who have considered themselves part of the Trotskyist movement must rethink their ideas and program, and must reject Trotskyism and permanent revolution.

Barnes' views have been published -- most comprehensively in his speech, "Their Trotsky and Ours," in the first issue of New International. The perspectives he puts forward have been the subject of a great deal of discussion by the F.I.T. in our Bulletin in Defense of Marxism and in our other literature.

As far as I know, the Barnes leadership has drawn no new conclusions as a result of the elections or other recent developments in Nicaragua. Their fundamental error is one of empiricism, which does not examine the revolutionary process critically, and isn't aware of the contradictions within that process--except in the most superficial way. What contradictions the SWP leadership does recognize in Nicaragua are all attributed to purely external and objective factors such as imperialist sabotage. But real revolutions cannot possibly unfold along such an ideal path.

This article is based on a talk given in New York January 18, 1985.

This method has nothing in common with Marxism. Pursuing this approach has led the present SWP majority further and further from the Leninist programmatic heritage that they claim to be upholding. And the danger remains that the party will break with that tradition entirely, signalling the final degeneration of the SWP as the continuator of revolutionary Marxism in the U.S.--an eventuality which the F.I.T. has been striving to avert since our formation.

SOCIALIST ACTION

There is another tendency which has also been participating in the struggle against the Barnes leadership of the SWP--Socialist Action. Actually, SA is not one tendency, but at least two. When I refer to SA here, I'm referring to the majority current in that organization.

Most people who are familiar with the recent evolution of the SWP, and the expulsion of the opposition, think of SA and the F.I.T. as two organizations that defend Trotskyism and permanent revolution. While that's true up to a point, the position of the SA majority toward Nicaragua is actually quite close to that of the SWP leadership, and quite far from the views held by the F.I.T.

What I stated before is common knowledge: the Barnes faction rejects the idea that a process of permanent revolution is occurring in Nicaragua under the conscious leadership of the FSLN. The SA majority also rejects this reality. Barnes and company conclude that there is something fundamentally wrong with permanent revolution; the SA position asserts instead that there is something fundamentally wrong with the revolutionary process in Nicaragua and with its leadership. Although the majority tendency in SA has not publicly expressed this view, it has adopted a statement which is critical of the resolution on Central America approved for the world congress by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

This statement, published in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin, asserts that the majority of the FI "shows evidence of a dangerous trend toward rationalizing and adapting to erroneous strategic conceptions" in part because there is now a majority view that the revolutionary process that began in Nicaragua in 1979 has a proletarian character. The SA statement, "The Stakes in the Central America Discussion," further states: "The previous FI resolutions called for the completion of the agrarian reform, the establishment

of soviet forms of workers' rule, workers' control, and the resolution of the 'mixed economy,' i.e., the overthrow of the partially dismantled capitalist state. By reversing its position, the FI is now rationalizing the non-completion of these tasks...."

Leave aside whether this is an accurate summary of the FI's previous positions concerning the "mixed economy," what I want to point to is the importance of this theme -- of the dangers of the "mixed economy" -- to SA. It is the main issue raised to illustrate their belief that the FSLN pursues a strategy of class-collaboration rather than one consistent with permanent revolution.

The SA Thanksgiving convention, which adopted this statement, also endorsed the general line of a report by Alan Benjamin which drew some rather drastic conclusions in this regard:

"During the first six months after July 19, 1979, 15 out of the 18 ministers in the government were bourgeois figures. This included ex-Somoza guards. Laws were passed which guaranteed private property and opposed the confiscations and seizures of land and factories by the workers and peasants."

"Or take the question of the monopoly of foreign trade. There is no real monopoly. What there is is a 70-percent nationalization of foreign trade which exempts manufactured goods and contains various other loopholes...."

"The fact that today a determining part of the agro-export industry -- cotton, coffee, sugar -- are still in the hands of the large owners ... means that the decisive sources of income that would permit the revolution to master the economy are not in the hands of the FSLN. Without control over these vital cash-crops, the revolution is still unable to follow a national plan to respond to the sabotage by the capitalists. This fundamental question has not yet been resolved."

The error of this approach is that it is completely schematic and one-sided. Affirmations about the superiority of socialist planning represent pure abstractions, which say nothing about the concrete reality in Nicaragua today. Of course socialist planning is superior in almost all ways to a "mixed economy" if you simply abstract these two poles.

That's fine as a programmatic norm: simple and straightforward. But real revolutions pose not just the single question "socialist planning vs. a mixed economy." They also pose others, and revolutionaries, if they are more than textbook revolutionaries, must approach

each revolutionary development as a specific combination of factors.

In an ideal situation we would like the transition to a planned economy to be as short as possible. But in a country like Nicaragua a short transition would require considerable economic and technical aid from a more economically developed country. Can Nicaragua depend on such aid? Isn't this a factor which it is reasonable for the FSLN to take into account in making its decisions?

It would be wrong to begin to question our programmatic norm on the expropriation of the bourgeoisie because of Nicaragua (that error is introduced by Barnes and company). But only those who make a fetish out of their program can think that recognizing the existence of an exception in Nicaragua represents a threat to our programmatic integrity.

The illusions about the mixed economy which may exist among some layers of the Sandinista leadership tell us nothing about whether the Nicaraguan revolution would be weaker or stronger if it carried out a wholesale nationalization of the economy. Of course there are dangers inherent in the present situation, and they are certainly increased to the degree those who are part of the process harbor misunderstandings and illusions. A mixed economy will not be able to secure the long-range goals of the Nicaraguan workers and peasants. But are the dangers that are aggravated by continuing the mixed economy for a period of time greater than the dangers that would be aggravated if the FSLN undertook sweeping nationalizations of the remaining privately owned industry?

This question can be answered only through a painstaking analysis by those on the scene. Trotskyists who try to answer it on the basis of programmatic generalities make a serious error. Whatever our long-range strategy vis-a-vis bourgeois property, there is no principled requirement that we pursue it immediately. In a situation like Nicaragua's, where present concessions to bourgeois property do not threaten the power of the workers and poor peasants (this is key), where they serve to aid a transition to an economy managed by the workers themselves (workers who must be trained, over time, to take on such tasks), and where they help to gain a breathing space for the revolution by creating divisions within the native capitalists, among neighboring bourgeois governments, and even within imperialism itself, it is in order to go slowly.

It is illuminating to look at the roots of the current tendencies -- SA and F.I.T.--which began to develop when

the forces that founded these groups were still in the SWP. From the very beginning of the opposition to the new line of the Barnes faction there have been two tendencies. And this question--of attitude and approach to the Nicaraguan revolution--has been one of the most fundamental issues dividing us. Some in the party thought that the roots of the revisionism of the Barnes faction were in its embrace of the Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions--and of the FSLN and NJM which led those revolutions.

But the other current, which was represented by the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the SWP National Committee (the predecessor of the F.I.T.), saw the situation differently. For us, the problem was not primarily that the Barnes leadership said many good things about the NJM and FSLN. This in and of itself was not wrong. We were all in favor of taking a 100 percent fraternal attitude toward these revolutions.

The big problem was not what the majority leadership said about the leaderships of these revolutions, but rather what it refused to say on the level of program and theory. In the name of embracing the Central American and Caribbean revolutions it began to adopt new ideas that were totally alien to our program and tradition--on workers' democracy, political revolution, building the Fourth International, and other key questions. As we know, this process has culminated in the present wholesale rejection of permanent revolution. Our struggle against the Barnes faction is strictly against this programmatic adaptation to the weaknesses of the Castroist current internationally, and not at all to its embrace of the positive features of the Castroist leaderships in Central America and the Caribbean.

THE SECTARIAN WING

There are many sects that pin the label "Trotskyist" on themselves, which go even further than SA in denouncing the FSLN's alleged class collaborationism. Generally they call for the overthrow of that leadership as the only means of moving the Nicaraguan revolution forward.

I'm not going to attempt a survey of this species of "Trotskyist," since that would take more time than it would be worth. But I want to single out one case--because it has some particular relevance to the present discussion among Fourth Internationalists in the United States.

There is a group known as the "Revolutionary Communist League (Internationalist)" which publishes a public bulletin entitled the Internationalist Worker. The RCL(I) is a split-off from the Workers World Party, and considers itself to be the true champion of the Marcyite "Global Class War" theory.

In the December 1984 issue of Internationalist Worker an article entitled "Nicaragua Review" appears. It is written by one Gregory Gibbs. The view presented in this piece has particular interest for us because it quotes extensively from the article, "Nicaragua, A People Armed," by Haskell Berman, which appeared in the November issue of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.

Berman's article was a report on his impressions and experiences during a visit to Nicaragua in August. While making clear his support for the revolution, and to the essential role played by the FSLN as its leadership (a leadership recognized by the masses), as well as his unconditional defense of Nicaragua against imperialist attack, Berman didn't try to present an idealized picture of the actual process that is going on. Part of support and solidarity with the revolution is being aware of its problems and weaknesses, as well as its victories and strengths. Internationalist Worker, however, presents a completely dishonest picture of Berman's article, quoting only from the parts where he discusses the contradictions and difficulties of the revolutionary process.

Gibbs believes that the problems discussed in the Berman article help him to "prove" his assertions about the FSLN because he completely idealizes the revolutionary process. If a revolution has a "correct" leadership, he reasons, things will go smoothly, and victory is assured. Therefore any problems or contradictions must be the result of misleadership. This is the mirror opposite of the error of the Barnes faction--which sees all contradictions as caused by purely objective difficulties.

The Gibbs article contains its own internal contradictions. It characterizes the FSLN government as "an increasingly bonapartist bourgeois regime," and also "a weak bourgeois government" that is "moving fast to the right." Yet it does not call for the overthrow of this "bourgeois government." Instead the article gives the question a special twist and asserts: "In acting to seize power, the proletariat seeks not to overthrow 'the FSLN' as such, but to split it between its bourgeois and proletarian wings." I won't comment on the theoretic

cal problems raised by the idea of the proletariat coming to power by splitting a "bourgeois" government (and a bonapartist one at that), but simply leave Gibbs with the overwhelming problem of explaining to the Nicaraguan proletariat its need to "split the FSLN." Gibbs and the RCL(I) don't represent much, but their example is instructive as a case study of the extremity to which sectarian errors can lead.

The sectarian "Trotskyists" also cite the FSLN's "illusions" in the mixed economy as the most glaring evidence of its class-collaborationist character. And this is worth going into a little more deeply, because I wonder what our self-proclaimed defenders of "revolutionary purity" might have said if they had been alive to comment on the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

Talk about illusions. Was there not a wing of the Bolsheviks who had extreme illusions during the period of War Communism? There certainly was--and it included Lenin and Trotsky. The predominant view within the Bolshevik party was that the sweeping measures decreed in the early years of the Russian revolution would constitute a direct path to the socialist reconstruction of the USSR. But of course that did not come to pass. These steps were absolutely justified as emergency measures of self-defense, but they could not lead directly to socialism in the context of a backward, wrecked, and isolated economy. They were a correct tactic, yet the Bolsheviks had serious illusions in them as a strategic perspective. (Does that sound familiar?)

Of course, it is possible that our sectarian friends today would not have made a big issue about such illusions, because they correspond so closely to the kinds of errors they make themselves in their analysis of the Central American revolution. But what about the similar illusions about the New Economic Policy that arose within the Bolshevik party after the end of War Communism? These were by no means restricted to the Stalin-Bukharin faction or symptomatic only of the future Stalinist degeneration. Would these illusions have caused some of our present-day revolutionary purists to change their assessment of the Bolsheviks, declaring that party to be something less than a revolutionary proletarian organization?

I raise this point not to be facetious, but because it illustrates the last basic error of understanding which I want to point out--one of idealizing the process of past revolutions, and then trying to apply that ideal to the

present day. This, of course, is similar to the idealization of the process as it is presently occurring, and also has much in common with the error involved in trying to impose an idealized program. In particular, the method involved in each of these is the same. There has

never been any such thing as a perfect revolutionary leadership, or a perfect revolution which can be a "model"--in this sort of schematic sense. It is completely wrong to test actual events in the class struggle against lifeless abstractions.

LETTERS

BARNES ALSO DISCARDS POLITICAL REVOLUTION

In your December issue (No. 14) you printed my letter about an important aspect of the SWP's August 1984 convention -- namely, that it disclosed the leadership's definite decision, after a long period of uncertainty, to call itself anti-Stalinist (while at the same time giving a new and watered-down content to the concept of "Stalinism").

I also asserted in that letter that the SWP leadership had still not resolved its position on political revolution in degenerated or deformed workers states, and that "the 'stance' toward political revolution (and how to redefine it) is still under discussion in the closed circle" that makes the decisions in the SWP today.

This was confirmed at the special convention of the SWP held on the eve of the world congress in January, when a special point was added at the end of the convention to hear a long talk by Jack Barnes about political revolution, among other things.

I (like the overwhelming majority of SWP members) was not allowed to attend the convention and will not try to quote Barnes in this second-hand account. But the essence of what he had to say was that the SWP and FI have been wrong about political revolution for decades and that it is necessary to discard this idea and learn from the Cuban leadership the correct approach toward workers states following incorrect policies.

This means that the discussion about political revolution has already been completed in the closed circle, before the members even knew it was being reconsidered. All that remains is a unanimous or near-unanimous "explanation" about how harmful the concept of political revolution has been for decades, or ever since it was first formulated in the 1930s.

Anyhow, the new position clarifies many things. It clarifies why the SWP prevented its members from participating in pro-Solidarity activity during the three years since the Polish Stalinists

CONDOLENCES ON LARRY STEWART

In recognition of Larry Stewart and in tribute to his memory:

With full respect and deep appreciation for his life's commitment and his indisputable, strong, and admirable contribution to the struggle.

Sincerely,
The Committee for Social Responsibility
Philadelphia, PA

imposed martial law, and why members advocating political revolution in Poland were expelled from the SWP during that time. It even clarifies why Mary-Alice Waters' report to the December 1984 NC meeting never mentioned Poland once although her subject was revolutionary developments throughout the world from 1979 to 1984.

Of course there are still a few contradictions to be cleared up. While the SWP leaders denied in 1981 that there was any element of revolution in Solidarity's struggle, they did protest -- at least in words -- against the Stalinist imposition of martial law. Castro, on the other hand, supported Jaruzelski and the Stalinist attack on the workers. Diffidently and unhappily, the SWP leaders at that time felt compelled to criticize Castro's position and differentiate themselves from it.

But now, if Castro's approach is correct and ours has been wrong for decades, won't Barnes have to apologize to Castro and engage in self-criticism for the "error" of having supported Solidarity, even if only in words?

More important: what will the SWP leadership do the next time the workers rise up by the millions against their oppressors in Poland and other Stalinized workers states?

A former SWP member

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