

Information, Education, Discussion

# BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

**PROLETARIAN OR BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION?**

Jack Barnes's 'The Coming Revolution in South Africa'

by Tom Barrett..... 1

**A STEP FORWARD FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKING CLASS**

New Federation Unites Major South African Trade Unions

by Tom Barrett..... 7

**NICARAGUA'S STATE OF SIEGE**

by Mary Scully..... 9

**DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION IN NICARAGUA,  
SOUTH AFRICA, AND PALESTINE**

by Stuart Brown..... 12

**EMERGENCY NATIONAL COUNCIL IN NEW YORK CITY HOLDS  
FIRST PUBLIC MEETING**

by June Martin..... 15

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**A WELDING OF MARXISM AND BIOLOGY**

A Review of 'The Dialectical Biologist'

by David Weiss and Steve Bloom..... 17

---

**MORE LENINIST THAN LENIN**

by Naomi Allen..... 22

**HOW HISTORY IS REWRITTEN ON WEST STREET**

by Chester Hofla..... 24

**ON REGROUPMENT AND PROGRAM: A RESPONSE TO STEVE BLOOM**

by Mike Patrick..... 27

LILLIAN CURTISS / MILTON SNIPPER..... 31

LETTERS..... 34



## Who We Are

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

The F.I.T. was created in the winter of 1984 by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because we opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than half a century. Since our formation we have fought to win the party back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective and for our readmission to the SWP. In addition our members are active in the U.S. class struggle.

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

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

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

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## PROLETARIAN OR BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION?

### Jack Barnes's 'The Coming Revolution in South Africa'

by Tom Barrett

The Fall issue of New International, the "theoretical" journal published by the SWP leadership, features a report on South Africa approved by the August 1985 SWP plenum. It was given by the party's national secretary, Jack Barnes. That it has been published by the Socialist Workers Party, which has represented the continuity of revolutionary Marxism in the United States for two generations, is an embarrassment.

Barnes says, "...revolutionists in the United States need a clear understanding of the character of the revolution that is unfolding in South Africa today. To be effective in helping mobilize support here for that revolution, we have to understand the line of march of the different classes in that revolution." That is, of course, true. However, Barnes accomplishes just the opposite in his report "The Coming Revolution in South Africa." He gives us no clear understanding of anything. His class "analysis" says nothing more than "the workers and peasants are oppressed and are fighting back." He presents a theory of the state which is pure invention from start to finish, and, in the name of "Leninism," he resurrects a two-stage theory of revolution which was at one time used as a weapon against Lenin himself.

#### THE 'APARTHEID STATE'

Barnes's position is founded upon a fantasy: the "apartheid state." Barnes says, "The apartheid system is more than an oppressive legal structure with far-reaching social and economic consequences. When we talk about the apartheid system, we are also talking about a state.

"The continued existence of apartheid is completely dependent on the existence of the apartheid state, and vice versa." As we shall see, Barnes's junking of the Marxist theory of the state, which holds that the state exists to enforce class rule, disarms the Socialist Workers Party against the strat-

egy that one wing of the imperialists is using at the present time.

State power exists for one and only one purpose--to defend the interests of a class which is dominant within a geographical area. The state defends that class's interests against other classes and against its class counterparts in other geographical areas. The fundamental characteristic of a state is its class character. Whose interests does it defend? The methods used by a state to defend the ruling class's interests are secondary; they are not a determining factor, and they can change as conditions change. Apartheid is not the determining characteristic of the South African state. Capitalism, or better, the rule of the capitalist class, is. Apartheid is a structure the South African white bourgeoisie erected to enable it to rule more efficiently and make bigger profits from the exploitation of African labor, and it is, of course, deeply ingrained into the fabric of South African society. However difficult it would be for the South African bourgeoisie to give up apartheid it could do it and remain in power. (They may not be willing to do so, a decision that will lead to their overthrow that much sooner. But this is a different question entirely.) If the South African bourgeoisie cannot or chooses not to give up apartheid, the government and business leaders in London and Washington would not hesitate to sacrifice white rule if that might save South Africa for imperialist exploitation. The destruction of apartheid would not in and of itself change the class character of the South African state.

In fact, apartheid is a rather recent development in the history of white-ruled South Africa. The present structure was set up, as Barnes acknowledges, in the 1950s. Apartheid was a method of ruling and exploiting which developed gradually in the 20th century in response to the bourgeoisie's needs. Many South African capitalists, both English and Afrikaner, have come to the



conclusion that it does not respond to their needs today, a conclusion shared by a section of the imperialists.

### THE ROOTS OF APARTHEID

Either Jack Barnes is not aware of South Africa's history, or he has chosen to ignore it. In a polemic against the Fourth International (his post-discussion summary) he takes issue with Peter Blumer's and Tony Roux's assertion that South Africa is a "dependent semi-industrialized country" on the grounds that it is actually one of the imperialist powers. While a surface glance at 1985 South Africa might lead one to believe that it is an advanced imperialist country, that surface glance would be deceptive.

Whites--primarily from the Netherlands--settled in South Africa between the 17th and 19th centuries. Their goals, methods, and experiences were not qualitatively different from those of the English settlers whose heirs rule the United States and Canada. Their relation to the native Africans was not much different than that of the English settlers to the native Americans. They exploited them when they could, and shot them when they couldn't. These settlers had come to stay, and they considered South Africa to be their country. They had no intention of sending profits back to the Netherlands or returning to Europe. They had come to build their plantations and prosper as South Africans.

Their interests, however, were primarily agricultural, rather than commercial or industrial, which was even reflected in the name often used to refer to them--Boers, a Dutch word meaning "farmers." Consequently, they did not establish a strong bourgeois state as the North American settlers did. The importance of South Africa's natural resources and position on maritime routes did not escape the notice of the British as capitalism entered its imperialist phase in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the Boers were not strong enough to resist them. The British Empire sought to establish itself in Africa "from Cape [of Good Hope] to Cairo," to find raw materials for British industry and to find markets for its industrial products. The Boer War of 1899-1902 consolidated British rule in South Africa.

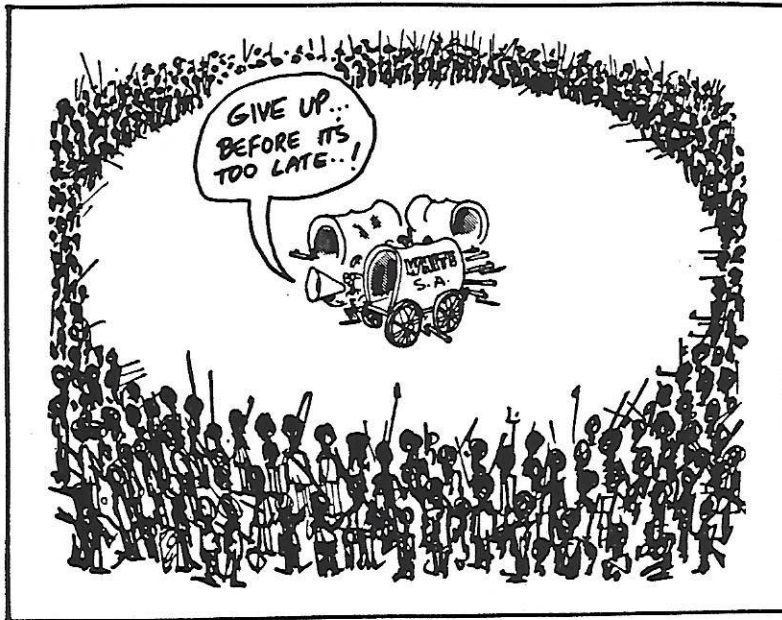
At that time the rest of the world saw the Boer War as an imperialist war, but with the Boers in the role of the "oppressed native people." Even the

Second International supported the Boers in their "war of national liberation." Nonwhite South Africans took a somewhat different view, often preferring British colonial rule to the tender mercies of the Boers. (Mohandas K. Gandhi, who was practicing law in South Africa at the time, served in the British army as a medic during the Boer War.) The Boers played no role in the integration of South Africa into the world imperialist economy, except in subordination to the British, and South Africa did not achieve full national independence until after World War II. When it became independent, control of the state passed from British colonialism to the descendants of the Boers, the Afrikaners.

The granting of independence to white-ruled South Africa did not in any way mean that it was of no further importance to imperialism. On the contrary. The decision to grant independence was based on the conclusion that direct colonial rule had become an obstacle to the exploitation of South Africa. The U.S. ruling class especially believed that its interests would be better served by a formally independent South Africa, whose rulers were linked by race and culture to the imperialist West. There was one problem: the overwhelming majority of the country's population was Black African, and in the post-World War II period Black African states were replacing direct colonial rule throughout the continent. Furthermore, South Africa's Blacks had a history of fighting for their rights. Total, brutal suppression of the African population was the Afrikaner solution, summed up in the Dutch word for segregation: apartheid.

Apartheid is a tool for imperialist exploitation, nothing more, nothing less. It is particularly brutal, to be sure, but, ultimately all imperialist exploitation is brutal. Make no mistake--the imperialist exploitation is based not in Pretoria or Johannesburg, though the white South African bourgeoisie plays its part and takes its cut of the profits; it is based in London and New York. The multinational corporations are the primary beneficiaries of the superexploitation of African labor. This is precisely why the demand for economic sanctions and the related demand of students in the United States that their universities sell their stock in companies which do business in South Africa are so effective politically. It is also the reason why it is illegal in South Africa to advocate divestiture or economic sanctions against the regime!





South Africa, while it is not dependent on "foreign aid" as such, is totally dependent on foreign equity investment.

The facts are plain: apartheid is rapidly becoming a liability for imperialism. Those South African businessmen who see the writing on the wall are perfectly willing to talk with Black leaders--including the African National Congress leaders in exile in Lusaka, Zambia--about a smooth transition to nonracial rule, a transition which would not threaten the ability of the multinational corporations to do business as usual. In this they have the backing of "more enlightened" politicians in Washington and London. There is no guarantee that they will succeed, of course, but there is equally no guarantee that they will not. The end of apartheid will be a victory for the South African masses no matter how it comes about; however, the end of apartheid will not necessarily mean the end of poverty, ignorance, and disease for them. On this question Barnes is silent.

#### NEW NATION-STATE ON THE AGENDA?

Barnes has chosen to ignore over a century of world history so that he may conclude that the forging of a South African "nation-state" is on the agenda in this period. He writes, "The apartheid system blocks the creation of a South African nation, a modern nation with modern producing classes.... Apartheid blocks modern class development and differentiation, whereby some Africans--as part of a South African nation--would

become free farmers, producing and selling their commodities on the market, while others would be able to sell their labor power on an equal basis with all other wage workers....

"A true nation-state in South Africa will be brought into being only as a result of the revolutionary overthrow of the apartheid state and the establishment of a new state power...."

So that there may be no confusion we should understand exactly what Marxists mean by "nation-state," and exactly what part the evolution of nation-states played in the transition from the Middle Ages to the bourgeois epoch.

The overriding economic reality of the Middle Ages in northwestern Europe was, for lack of a better word, "localism." Even at the height of Roman power there was very little trade in Western Europe. The villas--landed estates given as payment to Roman officers (in Latin, *equites*, or "knights")--were economically and militarily self-sufficient. They produced their own grain, grapes, and milk and made them into bread, wine, and cheese, no matter what the land was suited for or what the most efficient means of farming might be. The villas only contact with Rome was through the tax collector. When Roman power in the West was broken by the German tribes it came actually as a great relief to this emerging ruling class--the landed aristocracy.

Western Europe was broken up into hundreds of self-sufficient villas, each with its vineyards and wheatfields, each producing the necessities of life, and each defending itself inside castle



walls. France, the Netherlands, Switzerland...none existed.

When villas began producing and trading surpluses, trading centers grew up and began their evolution into modern cities. These cities, and the overland routes over which goods were transported, had to be defended. A different state power whose authority was greater than that of the knights of the manor evolved. This was the medieval kingdom. Though the knights retained power in the villas, they were subordinate to the king. The feudal kingdom was the political forebear of the modern nation-state, whose economic foundation is the national market.

National languages and culture actually evolved with the national markets. The archaic German and Latin spoken during the earliest years of the Middle Ages developed into modern French, Italian, English, German, Dutch, etc. as cities evolved, as people from different regions had to communicate with each other in order to trade. The market created the nation, not vice versa.

How far modern South Africa is from this process! The history of South Africa takes place in an entirely different context, in the formation of an entirely different market system.

The system of national markets reached its limit in the middle of the nineteenth century. The raw materials requirements of industrial production, combined with the need for markets in which to sell the vast quantities of commodities which the factories made, created the conditions for the world market. The conditions in which the bourgeoisie evolved from fairground traders and moneylenders keeping money in a bench (or "bank") no longer existed. The British, Belgian, Dutch, French, and later German, Italian, and American imperialist traders went into every corner of the world looking for plunder. It is in this context that modern South Africa evolved.

The economic foundation of the nation-state no longer exists; imperialism destroyed it, and it can never be resurrected. The world market is here to stay; imperialism laid the foundation for a socialist world, a world without borders, and that is what we are fighting for in every part of the world. No one can turn the clock back and erase history, in South Africa or anywhere else.

Barnes states, "From the historical standpoint, the South African revolution today is a bourgeois-democratic revolu-

tion....The South African revolution today is not an anticapitalist revolution....This democratic revolution cannot be carried through to victory under the leadership of any wing of the South African capitalist class or liberal political forces." What makes Barnes think that the classes in contention in South Africa will listen to him is beyond comprehension. He apparently thinks that the working class will lead a revolution for capitalism and that the bourgeoisie will trust the working class to administer a state ("nation-state"!) in the bourgeoisie's interests.

### A BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION?

As we have demonstrated, we live in a world in which class relationships transcend national borders. The bourgeoisie as a class no longer has any progressive role in any country whatsoever. Trade--which is, of course, the raison d'etre of the bourgeoisie since its origins--is organized on a world scale and controlled in the imperialist centers--London, Paris, New York, Zurich, Tokyo, Frankfurt, and so forth. The bourgeois in any country must contend with that reality--they cannot change it. The national bourgeoisie depends on the international banking system and shares in the return of multinational equity investment. Anyone who suggests that the national bourgeoisie can wage a consistent fight against imperialism is either ingenuous or dishonest. It has never happened since capitalism entered the imperialist phase, and it never will.

Barnes, as we see, does not suggest that the bourgeoisie will lead a revolution in South Africa. What he does suggest, however, is even less realistic. He suggests that the working class will lead a bourgeois revolution. However, the purpose of revolution is to smash the old state and replace it with another. And the purpose of any state formation is to defend class interests. Now, whose class interests will a post-revolutionary South African state defend?

Let us give Barnes the benefit of the doubt for a moment--suppose the working class accepts leadership which calls on them to make a revolution, but not an anticapitalist revolution. First of all, will the bourgeoisie trust this new state, which has been put into power by workers, which has smashed the previously existing bourgeois state, to defend its class interests? Even with all its promises, can it really convince



the bourgeoisie to risk its capital and invest? And what of the class struggle? If the economy remains capitalist, class relations in production do not change in any fundamental way. When workers strike for better wages and conditions, which side will the state take? Will the revolutionary government enforce laws which protect the laboring masses? If it does, what is to prevent the bourgeois from pulling their capital out and investing in more profitable parts of the world?

Barnes's schema is a house of cards. Real politics do not conform to his theoretical abstractions; theory, rather, must be a guide to understanding real politics. The interaction of classes is the driving force in politics, and neither the workers nor the capitalists are listening to Jack Barnes's speeches. The capitalists are interested in one thing: investing their capital at a profit. The workers are interested in improving their standard of living. They are not long going to be satisfied to be freed from the pass laws if they continue to live in the same poverty in which they live today. Does Barnes support the idea of a "revolutionary government" in South Africa which will defend bourgeois interests by violently repressing the "ultraleft" workers? The bourgeoisie, one can be sure, will be satisfied with nothing less. The revolutionary Marxist movement would recognize such a state as a bourgeois state, and would call for its overthrow by the working class.

If anyone wishes to put Nicaragua forward as a counterexample, we would ask who are the contras, and where do they come from? Why has the business community in Nicaragua done all it can to sabotage the revolution? Can anyone say there is patriotic unity between the contending class forces in that country? To ask the question is to answer it.

The Nicaraguan revolution is not yet finished. This is in no way a criticism of the Sandinistas, who are doing all they can to defeat the counter-revolution. It is a statement of fact. The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie will not continue to do business in its country if the state does not defend bourgeois class interests. They are at present doing all they can to overthrow the Sandinistas and put into power a state on which they can depend. The same class dynamics would come into play in South Africa as well.

Marxists approach the question of revolutionary leadership from an objective point of view: that is, what do the

workers and their allies need in a leadership? What does the revolutionary movement need to do to come to power? What does it need to do after it has come to power? Marxists base their conclusions on an objective study of the history and economy of the geographical area in question, as well as on revolutionists' own experience in the struggle over the years. The name given to these conclusions is program.

## CLASS, PROGRAM, AND LEADERSHIP

Marxists approach other organizations involved in a revolutionary movement in a similar fashion. What are their programmatic strengths and weaknesses? What do they represent in terms of absolute numbers and in class composition? Whose interests do they represent? Can we engage them in political dialogue? Our goal in relations with other organizations is to build a leadership with a winning program, which can win the support of the proletarian masses and the allies of the working class. For our purposes, statements like Barnes's, "The Socialist Workers Party recognizes that the African National Congress is the vanguard of the democratic revolution in South Africa," are not very useful.

The Fourth International recognizes that there are several organizations contending for the leadership of the South African revolution, each of which has its own strengths and weaknesses. Within all of them are individuals who could play a leading role in the South African revolution. Consequently, the Fourth International is interested in collaboration with all the anti-apartheid organizations. This recognizes reality as well: none of these organizations has a fully rounded revolutionary Marxist program. None of them has the exclusive allegiance of the African masses --and that includes the ANC. And as for the most powerful section of the Black population--the industrial working class --its trade unions are generally led by forces which have no allegiance to any other political formation.

As we have shown, the democratic struggle, which today takes the form of the fight to end apartheid, is vitally important, but its success would not by itself end the exploitation of the Black South African masses. Imperialist domination of South Africa would not necessarily end with the destruction of apartheid, nor would the poverty, ignorance, and disease which are the consequences of imperialist domination.



The ANC, however, has put forward no program beyond the democratic demands of the Freedom Charter.

The Freedom Charter is not a "bad" document. It is nothing more nor less than a bill of rights--a bill of equal rights--for the people of South Africa. As such, revolutionary Marxists support it. The demands are good ones, and the Charter as a whole is a good basis for organizing mass action--exposing the brutal racism of the South African government throughout the world and the "constructive engagement" policies of the Reagan administration.

However, a list of democratic demands--or any kind of demands--is not a full political program. It does not address the questions of which class shall rule, of reform or revolution, of revolutionary violence or nonviolence, or of alliances in the struggle. It does not speak to the question of the Soviet and Chinese revolutions and what they accomplished, what their limitations are, and to what extent their experiences should be repeated. It does not speak to the place of (in this case) the South African revolution in the context of the worldwide fight against colonialism and neocolonialism and the even larger fight of labor against capital. All political formations have answers to these questions, though they may not put them forward openly. The African National Congress is no exception.

The African National Congress is not a proletarian organization and has never claimed to be. It began as a civil rights organization in 1912 and in the decades following evolved into a nationalist formation. It consciously counterposes "national unity" to class struggle and openly rejects socialist revolution. It claims more than the vanguard role which Barnes attributes to it. It claims to be the entire democratic movement.

It is a distinct possibility that the ANC will come to power in South

Africa. The imperialists who want a negotiated settlement are willing to negotiate with the ANC. That is public knowledge. What assurances might the ANC give to the U.S. State Department or the British Foreign Office in a negotiated settlement? To what lengths would the ANC be willing to go to defend capitalism from "ultraleft" workers? How free would the trade unions be to defend workers' interests against the employers? Certainly these are questions which revolutionary workers in South Africa might legitimately ask.

#### ANOTHER STEP BACKWARD FOR THE SWP

"The Coming Revolution in South Africa" is the political statement reflecting another step towards accommodation with a Menshevik-Stalinist theoretical approach. Barnes is hiding behind the authority of Mandela and other ANC leaders as he imposes his line of two-stage revolution on the party membership.

What is clear to all objective observers, both supporters and opponents of revolutionary Marxism, is that Barnes's theories, as stated in "The Coming Revolution in South Africa," have no relationship to objective reality. The ANC makes no pretense that its "democratic revolution" is proletarian or that the proletariat is its decisive leadership. It sees no contradiction between its goals and a negotiated settlement which abolishes apartheid but leaves South Africa open for imperialist exploitation. Revolutionary Marxists recognize that "democracy" devoid of class content is a sham. There is no full democracy for the working masses without socialist revolution.

The SWP's continued existence as a revolutionary party depends on reversing its course away from Marxism. With each giant step backward--one of which is "The Coming Revolution in South Africa"--that task becomes more and more difficult. D



# A STEP FORWARD FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKING CLASS

## New Federation Unites Major South African Trade Unions

by Tom Barrett

On November 30, 1985, four years of unity negotiations among South Africa's trade unions came to a successful conclusion. At a conference in Durban, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was formed, bringing together the largest and most influential unions, including the National Union of Mine-workers, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), and the South African Amalgamated Workers' Union (SAAWU). The SAAWU and several other member unions of the new federation are also affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF), the anti-apartheid coalition influenced by the African National Congress (ANC). The new labor federation will have some 500,000 members, based in the most important basic industries in South Africa.

COSATU took a stand on several political issues facing the South African working class and the victims of South African racism. It decided, first and foremost, that it would be part of the struggle against apartheid--that its agenda would extend beyond the factory gates. It endorsed the international campaign for economic sanctions against the Pretoria regime--the advocacy of which is a crime under South African law. It rejected any racial criteria for membership--a clear stand in opposition to those who advocate an exclusively Black leadership, as well as to the white-only, government-supporting South African Confederation of Labor and Trade Union Confederation of South Africa.

Two other important union formations--the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) and the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (AZACTU)--did not participate in the founding of COSATU. Both are influenced by the Black Consciousness movement, which insists on exclusive Black leadership, and they cited the nonracialism of the new federation as a reason for their not joining. The largest and most important trade union in South Africa, the National Union of Mineworkers, split from CUSA to help form COSATU.

### ISSUES IN DEBATE

On a number of issues which have been debated among South African trade unionists there was agreement for the first time in a number of years. In some cases this has come about less from changes in opinion than from changes in objective conditions. The simultaneous growth of the anti-apartheid movement and of the independent labor movement--which have not at all been directly connected--has made this new agreement possible.

Among the most important questions is the relationship between the fight for workers' rights in the workplace and the fight against racial oppression. This has been complicated by the tactical considerations arising from police repression against both the labor and the anti-apartheid movements, especially since the legal structure of apartheid was put into place in the 1950s.

Nonracial unions were outlawed in South Africa in 1954. In the following year, the ANC established the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in defiance of the government ban. SACTU was able to grow to a membership of some 53,000 by 1961, but police repression drove it underground. It was unable to function as a day-to-day defender of workers' rights on the job.

In the 1970s, the South African regime received a number of serious blows, including the strike wave of 1973 and the Soweto uprising in 1976. The international outrage over the police murder of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko put additional pressure on Pretoria, which decided to institute some limited reforms to help South Africa's public-relations image. Among the reforms was a new labor law, put into effect in 1979. This law legalized unions which registered with the government--making open organizing and collective bargaining possible, but imposing severe restrictions on the unions' activities. Any political activity was completely prohibited.



One union federation was formed in 1979 which made the decision to register with the government. This was FOSATU, the Federation of South African Trade Unions. Its decision was based not on agreement with the restrictive labor law, but on tactical considerations. FOSATU decided that it was a wiser course to comply temporarily with the labor law and consolidate its member unions in the workplaces. When it became strong enough that the government could not destroy it, it could then ignore the ban on political activity and add its strength to the anti-apartheid movement. There was criticism of FOSATU for not affiliating to either the United Democratic Front or the National Forum, and for limiting its activity to shop-floor unionism. Some considered it a matter of principle not to comply with the government's antidemocratic laws.

At this point, however, both the anti-apartheid movement and the trade unions have grown in strength sufficiently that it would be much more difficult for the government to drive them underground as they did to SACTU in the 1960s. The formation of COSATU might not have been possible if FOSATU had not been able to function legally in its early years. It is now possible for the unions to drop the legal cover of pure-and-simple unionism and join the fight against white supremacy.

### NONRACIALISM

The question of whether the South African unions should be nonracial or exclusively Black continues to be debated. It does not lend itself to simple answers. There is no question that the Black Consciousness movement is to a great degree responsible for the strength of the anti-apartheid movement today, which builds in large part on the struggles led by that movement in the 1970s. Among the advocates of exclusively Black leadership in the struggle there is concern that nonracialism is a cover for eventual compromise with the South African ruling class and with imperialism. They distrust the ANC

specifically, and are suspicious of anything in which the ANC is involved.

However, it is clear that the supporters of nonracialism have won the greatest support. To a certain extent this is a judgment on their actions, for they have been in the forefront of the fight for Black rights. Of course, in South Africa Blacks are not the only racially oppressed people: the unity in action of the Blacks, Coloureds, and Asians as well as those whites who oppose racism can only make the anti-apartheid struggle stronger.

In any event, both sides would be wrong to make it a matter of principle. The Black Allied Workers Union, CUSA, and AZACTU represent too many workers to be written off; their leaders as well as COSATU's should continue to try to come to an agreement which could further unify the labor movement. CUSA, FOSATU, and UDF affiliates worked together to organize the November 1984 strikes in Transvaal province. They did not stop disagreeing; but they put aside their disagreements to work together in a common action, and they proved they could do it successfully.

The true test, of course, will be the test of action. If COSATU lives up to its promise in the fight against poverty and racism it will put additional pressure on those unions which did not participate in the unification to join it. So far, as we have seen, the most important union in the federation, the National Union of Mineworkers, broke from CUSA to join COSATU because it did not believe that CUSA was serious about working for unity in the labor movement. Only if COSATU ends up placing other interests ahead of those of its members and compromises unnecessarily with the employers and government, will it lose its appeal. The militant South African workers will turn to other leaders. So far, however, there is no indication of such a course. Much work must be done in the future to bring together the labor movement and the Black community-based antiracist movement. COSATU has begun that work, and we have good reason to be optimistic about its future. □



# NICARAGUA'S STATE OF SIEGE

by Mary Scully

The reimposition of the state of emergency in Nicaragua, on October 15, 1985, has stimulated comment by both opponents and supporters of the Nicaraguan revolution. Unfortunately, little of this comment places the problem in its correct context--the enormous problems facing the Nicaraguan revolution as a result of the war of aggression sponsored by the United States.

The measures implemented by the Nicaraguan government suspend freedom of the press, the right to hold political meetings and demonstrations, the right to strike, as well as certain judicial procedures such as the right to habeas corpus. On October 30, Nicaragua's National Assembly restored the right to a jury and an attorney and habeas corpus for prisoners not accused of crimes against "the security of the national and public order."

## REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCY

In announcing the emergency measures, the Sandinista leadership explained that to strengthen Nicaragua's fighting power in the war against the U.S.-backed contras it is necessary to curb the counterrevolutionary activities of those forces within Nicaragua participating in and abetting U.S. aggression.

In the midst of a war for survival, religious leaders led by the Roman Catholic archbishop of Managua were conducting a provocative national campaign to resist the draft and thus sabotage the national defense effort.

In the midst of a serious economic crisis, businessmen and opposition political parties were stepping up their campaign to further disrupt and undermine the economy. The intent of these activities is to weaken the country and make a counterrevolutionary invasion that much easier.

Interior Minister Tomas Borge insisted it would be a "historic stupidity" to allow the formation of such an internal front. President Daniel Ortega held up the comparison with Allende's Chile, saying "We would rather not make

the same mistakes. We would rather guarantee our survival by taking these measures than to receive postmortem condolences."

Given the war and the state of the economy, the Sandinista leadership also felt compelled to restrict the right of workers to strike--that is to close down industries necessary for survival.

## THE U.S. WAR OF AGGRESSION

The facts of the U.S. war against Nicaragua are staggering. In his October 21 address to the United Nations, President Ortega described the human cost alone: 11,000 dead, 5,000 wounded, 5,000 kidnapped, and a quarter of a million forced to move from their homes--out of a population of 3.5 million people. "If the country attacking us were to face a proportional cost in victims, it would have suffered a total of 723,000 dead, that is, almost three times the amount of Americans killed during World War II, or the entire population of Boston. It would have 373,000 wounded and 17 million 550 thousand families forced to move, the equivalent of the entire population of the State of New York. And 9,000 women and 15,000 children under 12 would have been murdered."

The Sandinista leadership is completely justified in putting the defense of the Nicaraguan revolution ahead of the "democratic rights" of counterrevolutionaries.

## BOURGEOIS REACTIONARIES

On October 16, Bernard Kalb, speaking for the State Department, said predictably, "The Sandinista government has taken a further step toward imposing a totalitarian regime on the people of Nicaragua." He added, "This action is the result of the growing disillusionment with the Sandinista regime by large sectors of the population and reflects the Sandinista's fear of their own people. This, not any action of the United States, is the cause of the suspension of civil liberties in Nicaragua."



Through this mythical portrayal of the Sandinista regime as a Stalinist-style dictatorship without popular support, the U.S. imperialists attempt to provide a cover for their intervention. What an admirable concern for democracy from a government which counts among its allies the likes of Botha, Marcos, and Pinochet.

### THE PRESS

The U.S. media, in shame-faced complicity with the State Department, echoed the official line and took up the campaign against the Sandinistas. On October 18, a New York Times editorial entitled "Nicaragua Bares the Nightstick" argued that U.S. aggression had nothing to do with the suspension of democratic rights. "A more likely explanation is an eruption of discontent over a crumbling economy and military conscription." (One wonders what is the cause of Nicaragua's economic problems and military draft if not the U.S. economic embargo and its sponsorship of the contras?)

An October 12 Washington Post editorial, entitled "Regression in Nicaragua," argues that the Sandinistas have "gone back to the Cuban-type police-state rules." "Now," they say, "the totalitarian core of the Sandinista philosophy is out in plain view." And again, "In a perverse way, the crackdown seems to be a more reliable index of popular feelings than the tilted elections the government ran last November."



Robert Leiken, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, writing a guest column in the October 27 New York Times, declared: "Mr. Ortega blames 'U.S. imperialism' and rebel 'sabotage and political destabilisation,' but only a dictatorship lacking popular support chooses to fight rebellion with repression instead of rallying its people to defend their

country." Leiken, and all of the other pro-State Department commentators, ignore the fact that emergency measures like those imposed by the Sandinistas are extremely common in any country during wartime. They are not unheard of even in these United States. (Far more draconian provisions, for example, were imposed by Abraham Lincoln--that well-known opponent of civil liberties--during the Civil War.)

These shameless apologists for U.S. aggression try to cover over the crimes of the contras and exaggerate the breadth of popular opposition in order to better undermine international opposition to U.S. intervention. Their only criticism of the U.S. government is that it hasn't done enough to clean up the bloody image of the anti-Sandinistas to more effectively sell the war against Nicaragua.

### THE LIBERALS

Liberal columnists like Tom Wicker in the New York Times (October 21) and Mary McGroary in the Washington Post (October 22 and October 29) fatuously reproach the Sandinistas for being "their own worst enemies" by "provoking" U.S. imperialism. They reproach the Nicaraguans for turning away from the kind of democracy acceptable to the U.S. State Department, the CIA, and the counterrevolutionaries.

The line taken by these liberal apologists helps the U.S. government shift the blame for the wartime measures away from U.S. imperialism and onto the Sandinista leadership. Their tepid opposition to U.S. intervention becomes mere empty rhetoric, and they make themselves accomplices in the campaign to poison the minds of the American people.

A completely false appreciation of Nicaragua's emergency was even repeated at the AFL-CIO convention by a number of trade union leaders who have been vocal in opposition to the Lane Kirkland-CIA line pursued for many years by the American union movement. During the debate on the foreign policy resolution at the convention, the comments of those who opposed union support for aid to the contras and to the Duarte regime in El Salvador were nevertheless marked by their expressions of opposition to the "suppression" of democratic rights by the Sandinistas. This approach, which concedes fundamental ground to the reactionary line, severely weakens the fight against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and El Salvador.



## A PECULIAR TWIST

A small proportion of the comment about the Nicaraguan state of siege, mostly from radical groups and left press, has recognized the necessity for the emergency measures and refused to make any concession to the propaganda campaign which has been whipped up around it. A peculiar twist, however, was added by Doug Jenness, a central leader of the Socialist Workers Party, writing in the November 18 Intercontinental Press.

Jenness's article makes all of the correct points about the hypocrisy of the U.S. ruling class and the fact that the primary necessity in Nicaragua today is the defense of the country against U.S. aggression. But at one point he implies something which goes far beyond these basic points. Commenting on the contrast between the state of siege in Nicaragua and Argentina, Jenness declares: "Argentina's state of siege defends the class interests of the exploiters. Nicaragua's advances the class interests of the exploited" (emphasis added).

The distinction between the two underlined words, "defends" and "advances," might seem insignificant. But in reality it reflects the new view of workers' democracy being propounded by the SWP leadership--which asserts that the kinds of rights which were suspended by the Nicaraguan state of siege are "merely" bourgeois-democratic rights, and these have little significance during a process of proletarian revolution.

This is profoundly mistaken. The state of siege in Nicaragua is not an

advance for the proletariat, but a severe setback. The need to suppress bourgeois-democratic rights--even temporarily--makes it that much harder for the workers and peasants to move their revolution forward. The fact that it is a sacrifice made necessary by immediate considerations doesn't change this truth at all.

## DEMOCRACY IN NICARAGUA

The Sandinista leadership has demonstrated its commitment to democracy ("political pluralism") in Nicaragua. It is well aware of the serious risks involved in imposing the emergency measures, and many comments by spokespersons for the Sandinistas have explained that this action was only taken with the greatest reluctance. The Nicaraguan revolutionaries know that the U.S. State Department can use these measures to gain valuable propaganda mileage and to undermine opposition among the American people to U.S. military intervention; and that the wartime suspension of democratic rights would be used to reinforce the myth--resulting from the crimes of Stalinism--that socialist revolution means the implementation of an inherently totalitarian system.

But true defenders of democracy, and especially those who would defend democracy in Nicaragua, have the duty first of all to defend that country unconditionally against the U.S.-backed war. The first democratic right of the Nicaraguan people is to determine their own form of government, without being threatened by bombs and bullets made in the U.S.A. □



# DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION IN NICARAGUA, SOUTH AFRICA, AND PALESTINE

by Stuart Brown

With the growth of U.S. intervention in Central America, and the effort to build a movement to turn back that intervention, the problem has arisen of how to relate to other issues in international and U.S. politics. This debate is similar to the discussion about building an effective movement in the late 1960s and early '70s against the Vietnam war, though it is by no means identical to it.

The problem is posed both objectively and subjectively. The predatory imperialist government which is responsible for the war against the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran peoples also plays a primary role in perpetuating the oppression of others throughout the world. Domestically, the attack on the standard of living of U.S. workers, on their unions, on their quality of life, on the rights of oppressed nationalities and of women continues unabated. Those who are participants in or defenders of these many and varied struggles are sometimes reluctant to take actions which are perceived as subordinating them to a specific defense of the right to self-determination in Central America.

## STRATEGIC PROBLEM

The number one responsibility of revolutionaries in this country is to help build a movement which will contribute concretely to the success of the struggles in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Ongoing revolutions are taking place in these countries which are threatened by the military actions of our own government. The task of such a movement is to mobilize as many people as possible in opposition to the present policies of the Reagan administration (not to mention in opposition to the likely escalation of those policies).

Our strategic orientation, then, is for mass action around the demand, "U.S. HANDS OFF CENTRAL AMERICA!" This is our most effective potential tool to defend the revolution in that part of the world. Any and all other questions--what issues to relate to this central

demand and how to relate them--come under the category of tactics.

Those who make up the Administrative Committee of the national April Actions Coalition--who are responsible for the cancellation of the national call for action on April 26 of this year--do not share our strategic perspectives. They believe that the most promising strategy for obtaining their goals is through influencing the liberal/"rainbow coalition" wing of the Democratic Party. This is what dictates their "tactical" decisions, and lays the basis for our "tactical" disagreements over whether or not to hold demonstrations.

Many who have been active within the Central America movement still don't agree that mobilizing people around this issue is the major task we face. They set their hopes on what is presented as a longer-term "movement building" strategy, which takes up a broad range of problems. This they counterpose to a focus on Central America. Here, too, disagreements which may appear to be over tactics stem in fact from something more fundamental. (Of course, there is a great deal of overlap between the "movement builders" and the pro-Democratic Party elements.) In these cases we should not confuse our strategic dispute with a tactical one.

The rest of this article will assume agreement with a mass-action focus on Central America.

## DECIDING ON TACTICS

The main question is what actions, slogans, issues, etc. will aid us in mobilizing people, and likewise, which constitute an obstacle. In this context I will discuss the other two subjects in the title of this article: Palestine and South Africa.

Our approach flows from purely practical considerations, and cannot be based on an effort to weigh these struggles on some abstract and necessarily arbitrary moral scale. It would be impossible to try to compare the validity



of the demands of the Palestinian people, or the Black and other non-white masses in South Africa, either with each other or with those of the workers and peasants of Nicaragua and El Salvador.

But there is a big difference in terms of the understanding and consciousness about these struggles on the part of the average working person in the United States, which means that in our effort to mobilize people against Reagan's war in Central America, the issues of Palestine and South Africa play qualitatively different roles. The demand "NO U.S. SUPPORT TO APARTHEID" is supported by millions, and has already been the focus for massive public protests. Tying the issue of Central America to this question serves to broaden the appeal of the anti-intervention movement.

Unfortunately, years of reactionary bourgeois and Zionist propaganda have had a deep impact on the thinking of most Americans. They not only fail to understand the reality of Zionist oppression, but even go so far as to believe that the Palestinians are somehow to blame for their own plight. Tying our demands on Central America to a defense of the Palestinian struggle, as some within the movement have proposed, would be an obstacle to organizing support. It is for this reason, and this reason alone, that we are not in favor of it.

### STRUGGLES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

Let's look at things, however, from the point of view of supporting the right to self-determination of the Palestinians, rather than strictly from the angle of how to build a movement around Central America. As we have pointed out, the Palestinian struggle is legitimate in its own right--no less than Central America and South Africa--even if it is not one which can presently manage the same level of activism. Don't matters look different if approached from this angle? This is not an unimportant problem, since revolutionaries in this country have been, and will continue to be, involved with all three issues--Central America, South Africa, and Palestine.

The fact is that the movement in solidarity with Palestine needs to have the same orientation toward the Central America movement as the Central America movement should have toward the anti-apartheid struggle. Pro-Palestinian activists can tie their explanations in with the issues that enjoy a broader

understanding and a higher level of active support, and they can join in building those broader movements as much as possible. This, however, is qualitatively different from asking the movement around Central America to also become a movement around Palestine. That would serve neither the interests of the Central American nor the Palestinian peoples.

The Palestinian struggle can only gain from the broadest possible outpouring of opposition to U.S. government policy in Central America. The activity of masses in planning, organizing, and participating in demonstrations in support to self-determination for the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran peoples could even lay the basis for a qualitative breakthrough in understanding the Palestinian problem. The struggle against the Vietnam war was instrumental in changing the consciousness of many thousands who today solidarize with the struggles of the Palestinian masses.

### A SHOOTING WAR

The considerations for both the Central America and Palestinian movements would change qualitatively, however, if there were an actual armed intervention by U.S. troops in the Middle East. This would completely transform the objective situation that we face.

Such an intervention would not necessarily change the level of comprehension of the issues involved in the Middle East conflict within the U.S. population (in fact, it might make things even more difficult at first), but it would alter the consciousness of the average working person in many ways. And for the more advanced elements--who are today attracted to the anti-intervention movement--it would seem obvious why the link between Central America and Palestine should be made, which is not at all the case at the present time.

A movement against military intervention in Central America--i.e., for the right to self-determination of the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan peoples--would be totally discredited if it stood silently while its own government used that same military force for similar purposes in another part of the world.

In a broader sense, the present anti-intervention movement is not so much a "Central America" movement as it is a movement against U.S. intervention and in favor of the right to self-determination which today focuses on Central America and South Africa as the primary



areas of concern. It is in this sense that it can truly be called a continuation of the movement against the Vietnam war. If the Middle East were to suffer an invasion of U.S. troops, the attention of the movement would obviously have to be turned there as well.

### SINGLE-ISSUE, MULTI-ISSUE?

All of this relates, of course, to the ongoing discussion which is sometimes badly posed as "single-issue" vs. "multi-issue." The anti-intervention movement is not today a single-issue movement, and the anti-Vietnam war movement was not really ever a single-issue movement in the caricatured sense by which that idea is usually presented. During the Vietnam war as well as today the forces trying to mobilize the people of this country against U.S. intervention bring in many issues, and explain the relevance of those issues to the primary problem at hand.

A united-front effort, such as that which was organized around Vietnam and which needs to be put together around

Central America, can only be effective if it is focused around one, or a small number of closely related problems. This is what makes unity possible among those who do not agree on what to do about most things. Each component of the united front will bring its own concerns, and explain its reasons for opposing U.S. intervention. This gives the movement strength, and the movement as a whole must reflect its broad diversity.

It is a common methodological error on the left to counterpose things in a discussion which are not counterposed in life. A united-front effort around opposition to U.S. military intervention in other peoples' affairs--which today must obviously focus on Central America--should not be counterposed to building other united fronts around other questions, or even to building a broad revolutionary formation to fight for a full socialist program. But these tasks are also not identical, and they cannot be treated as if they were identical without completely defaulting in our responsibilities as proletarian revolutionaries and internationalists. □

## PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN NICARAGUA

by Paul Le Blanc

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

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## EMERGENCY NATIONAL COUNCIL IN NEW YORK CITY HOLDS FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

by June Martin

On December 13, 1985, New York City supporters of the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean sponsored their first public meeting. It was a forum entitled "Central America and Southern Africa: How to Reverse U.S. Policy." The meeting was held in the Washington Square Methodist Church near New York University. A mailing about the meeting had gone out to over 300 individuals and groups.

Speakers at the forum were America Sosa of the Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared, and Assassinated of El Salvador, Monsignor "Oscar Arnulfo Romero" (COMADRES); Marvin Gettleman, professor of history at Brooklyn Polytechnical Institute who has played a prominent role in the academic community opposing U.S. foreign policy and defending civil liberties; Jerry Gordon, national ENC coordinator; Diane Phillips, member of the National Organization for Women and the Longshoremen's Union; Bill Henning, 2nd vice president of the Communication Workers of America, Local 1180; Louis Clayton Jones, attorney who represented the family of Michael Stewart in a recent trial of police who were charged with complicity in his murder while in police custody; and Sister Marjorie Tuite, a Dominican nun who has been an outstanding figure in the U.S. religious community opposing U.S. foreign and domestic policy and defending those oppressed by it.

The meeting was attended by around 70 people, 32 of whom signed up to be on the mailing list. The organizers were very pleased with the presentations of the panelists and with the nature and tone of the discussion that followed. The program was organized to review the criminal activities of the U.S. government and manifestations of the widespread opposition to U.S. policy; but most of all the organizers sought to raise the issue of how we can organize effectively to stop what the U.S. is doing.

Four of the speakers are playing key roles in organizing anti-interven-

tion work of their own. Sister Tuite has, among other things, organized the Women's Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in Central America; Marvin Gettleman was a founding member of the New York Faculty Committee for Human Rights in Central America; Bill Henning is involved in the political currents within the AFL-CIO who challenged the union bureaucracy's uncritical support to U.S. foreign policy at the recent AFL-CIO convention; he is also working with the Labor Committee Against Apartheid. Diane Phillips was among those responsible for introducing the proposal which passed at the recent NOW convention putting NOW on record as being opposed to U.S. policy in Central America. Louis Clayton Jones, longtime opponent of the racist policies of the U.S. government in the U.S. and abroad, organized an historic challenge to the right of cops in New York City to commit murder with impunity in his position as prosecuting attorney in the trial of five New York Police Department officers charged with complicity in the police murder of a Black New York youth who had been apprehended for writing graffiti on subway walls. America Sosa, whose husband died from police torture in 1981, who had had one son disappear in 1983, and whose other son has recently been kidnapped by police, is on a national speaking tour for COMADRES to expose the atrocities being carried out as a result of U.S. military aid to the El Salvador government and to call for an end to such aid.

Jerry Gordon, speaking for the ENC, in addressing himself to the reality of the situation we face -- a criminal U.S. foreign policy and a fragmented but devoted domestic opposition -- explained why the ENC was formed. He explained that the lack of unity in action of all the diverse groups and individuals in this country who oppose U.S. policy in Central America had emboldened the U.S. government to escalate its murderous military intervention against the workers and peasants in Central America who are fighting for their rights. He explained why the movements in this country against U.S. policy in Central Amer-



ica/the Caribbean and the movements against U.S. support to apartheid in South Africa are part of a whole and reinforce one another. He pointed to the unity of the anti-apartheid forces in the U.S. as an example for the anti-intervention movement. He described the initiatives the ENC had undertaken toward the anti-intervention forces in an effort to urge and promote such unity and the extent to which unity had been achieved. He explained why the recent decision by the Administrative Committee of the April Actions Coalition to cancel the action for the spring of 1986 had been a real setback for the building of a movement to reverse U.S. policy; and why this made the ENC's efforts ever more important.

The December 13 forum was organized by a small group of individuals in New York who are committed to the goals of the ENC; but the ENC had no official chapter. The meeting's organizers announced at the forum that an open ENC meeting would be held January 8 to organize an ENC chapter and to plan spring efforts. Twenty people attended that January 8 meeting. The body voted to constitute themselves the New York City Chapter of the ENC and to begin working toward bringing together the peace and anti-intervention forces in New York in the spring of 1986 for a united action.

The ENC supporters hope that the need for unity is felt by much broader forces and that with persistent efforts such unity will be achieved. □

## EMERGENCY NATIONAL COUNCIL AGAINST U. S. INTERVENTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA/THE CARIBBEAN



### **PURPOSE**

To educate and mobilize masses of Americans for urgently needed united actions in response to the emergency caused by U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean — with special emphasis on broadening the involvement of the trade union movement. Linking this struggle to the fight to end U.S. support for the apartheid regime in South Africa reinforces and strengthens both the anti-intervention and anti-apartheid movements.

### **PROGRAM**

The Council supports the right of self-determination and demands an immediate end to U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, and an end to U.S. support of South Africa's apartheid government. These demands must be related to U.S. intervention in other areas of the world and to the critical economic and social problems facing the American people. Union-busting, high unemployment, and discrimination against minorities and women go hand-in-hand with U.S. foreign policies that deny to peoples in other lands the right to decide for themselves what kind of society they wish to build.



# A WELDING OF MARXISM AND BIOLOGY

## A Review of 'The Dialectical Biologist'

by David Weiss and Steve Bloom

The Dialectical Biologist, by Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1985, 303 pp., \$20.

The Dialectical Biologist is an avowedly Marxist work that transcends the particular scientific disciplines of its two authors. Richard Levins is John Rock Professor of Population Sciences at the Harvard School of Public Health. Richard Lewontin is Professor of Zoology, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University. They understand and present their specialized fields as integrally connected with other areas of human knowledge and with the world as a whole. In their global view nature is interlinked with society, and natural science with politics. It is clear from numerous references in The Dialectical Biologist that Levins and Lewontin have not only read Marxist economics and philosophy, but have mastered a considerable portion of what they have read.

The book is not without its problems, however. There are gaps and errors in the appreciation by Levins and Lewontin (who are primarily natural scientists) of certain key Marxist political and social concepts: for example the central Marxist law of historical materialism--the conflict between the growth of productive forces and the established relations of production. They fail to appreciate the criterion for social progress being determined by the growth of the productivity of labor. These, among others, represent serious flaws in their work, but remain secondary nonetheless. The main contribution of The Dialectical Biologist is not on sociological or political questions, but on biological ones.

The authors state their own "sociopolitical assumptions" quite candidly, and readily acknowledge that these influence their scientific activity: "Scientists, like other intellectuals, come to their work with a world view, a set of preconceptions that provides the framework for their analysis of the

world. These preconceptions enter at both an explicit and an implicit level, but even when invoked explicitly, unexamined and unexpressed assumptions underlie them .... We too have our own intellectual preconceptions. If we differ from most scientists, it is in our deliberate attempt to make these preconceptions explicit where we can."

Levins and Lewontin also differentiate themselves from the vulgar Stalinist versions of the dialectic. In the first page of their preface they explain: "Ignored or suppressed for political reasons, in no small part because of the tyrannical application of a mechanical and sterile Stalinist diamat, the term dialectical has had only negative connotations for most serious intellectuals, even those on the left."

### MARXISM AND SCIENCE

The authors' dedication of their book reads: "To Frederick Engels, who got it wrong a lot of the time but who got it right where it counted." This, of course, refers to Engels's writings, such as Dialectics of Nature, The Role of Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man, and Anti-Duhring. These attempt to demonstrate that the laws governing motion and development that he and Marx uncovered and applied to social phenomena--dialectical materialism--are not only social laws, but derive from a fundamental understanding of the natural world, from which the social world evolved. This was necessary in order to provide the international workers' movement with a firm understanding of the materialist dialectical conditions of the class struggle.

As Levins and Lewontin explain, "Engels' understanding of the physical world was, of course, a nineteenth century understanding, and much of what he wrote about it seems quaint." They point out that "Engels' essay fragment, 'The Role of Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man,' drafted sometime between 1872 and 1882, explores this relation in the Lamarckian framework of



direct inheritance of acquired characters." (Gregor Mendel's famous experiments in genetics were not rediscovered, of course, until 1890.) The authors continue, "But if we replace that direct causation by the action of natural selection, the critical argument remains valid."

Dialectics of Nature was never finished by Engels, and remained a partially edited manuscript, much of it in the form of fragmentary notes, at the time that he died. The explosion of scientific knowledge which outdated much of the material Engels used has escalated the task of undertaking a similar survey of all of science to a qualitatively higher and more complex level.

Extensive and detailed works dealing with specific branches of scientific knowledge and their interrelationship with all of nature and society is what is required. This is precisely what Levins and Lewontin have contributed with their own studies in biology. Their book "is meant to show how science and other aspects of social life [note: science as an aspect of social life] interpenetrate and to show why scientists, whether they realize it or not, always choose sides."

Engels's work, while the best-known example of attention to scientific problems by prominent Marxists, is not the only one. Another is Lenin's famous Materialism and Empirio-Criticism written in 1908, where he took up the struggle against a group of natural scientists--the most prominent of whom was the physicist Ernst Mach.

Mach's anti-dialectical and anti-materialist ideas began to penetrate the Bolshevik party after the defeat of the 1905 revolution in Russia. Though not formally trained in the natural sciences or in philosophy, Lenin spent the best part of a year in the Geneva and London libraries, doing a study of more than 200 sources for his counterattack. Lenin demonstrated his appreciation of the importance of scientific matters as they relate to philosophical questions, and particularly for the way that philosophical matters impinge on the problems of proletarian revolution.

Lenin's study of the issues raised by Mach, in turn, laid the basis for his later investigation of all of Hegel's major works on the dialectic--in logic, in nature, and in history--despite their idealist form. These studies are recorded in his posthumously published Philosophical Notebooks. These notes could have been elaborated into a more modern succession to Engels's work. But

the Bolshevik revolution, for which this study fully prepared him, demanded Lenin's full attention.

## SCIENCE AND THE DIALECTIC

Levins and Lewontin show their own appreciation of the relationship between scientific, philosophical, and social problems. Though their main work deals with what the Marxian dialectic has to offer the practical scientist, they emphatically hold that "to do science is to be a social actor engaged, whether one likes it or not, in political activity. The denial of the interpenetration of the scientific and the social is itself a political act, giving support to social structures that hide behind scientific objectivity to perpetuate dependency, exploitation, racism, elitism, colonialism....Whether the cause of tuberculosis is said to be a bacillus or the capitalist exploitation of workers, whether the death rate from cancer is best reduced by studying oncogenes or by seizing control of factories -- these questions can be decided objectively only within the framework of certain sociopolitical assumptions."

The Dialectical Biologist gives a convincing demonstration of the way dialectical materialism has aided Levins and Lewontin in their work--suggesting fruitful paths of investigation and helping to explain complex interrelationships. Yet, as the authors themselves readily acknowledge, only a small number of Western scientists take a similar approach.

Despite this, there have been and continue to be enormous advances made in the imperialist countries, where pragmatism and empiricism reign supreme. How is this to be explained if the dialectic is necessary for the natural sciences? An understanding of great leaps and qualitative turning points in science--acknowledged by virtually every investigator in every discipline--are evidence of an underlying dialectical dynamic, even if only partially grasped. The lack of a conscious appreciation of this dynamic stands as a serious obstacle to the advancement of human knowledge.

Levins and Lewontin take up one example of this. They fully credit "The Darwinian theory of evolution" for its "commitment to materialism and ... the universality of change" as "part of a dialectical view" (emphasis added). But "it is the organism as the alienated object of external forces that marks off the Cartesianism [i.e., Descartes's



philosophical approach] of Darwin from the dialectical view of organism and environment as interpenetrating so that both are at the same time subjects and objects of the historical process."

The lack of a conscious and developed dialectic, they point out, also led Darwin to believe that "nature takes no jumps." He therefore could not solve the problem of "the absence of intermediates and the incompleteness of the fossil record."

### DEFENSE OF MARXISM TODAY

The Dialectical Biologist is a fresh breeze in the noxious atmosphere of the current worldwide assault on Marxism. Ronald Reagan thunders against Marxism and the "empire of evil" with unabashed ignorance. Pope Paul II tutors the earth's millions of dispossessed against sinful Marxist materialism and the lust for possessions. They are accompanied by the more sophisticated academic theorists and top "leaders" (read reformists) of the workers movement. Video and film flood their audiences with "anti-terrorist" and anti-Soviet Rambomania. And an obscurantist religious revival has even reached into the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

That a defense of Marxist philosophy should now come from inside the community of natural scientists is a development to be warmly welcomed by the revolutionary movement. In recent years, even the best elements in that movement have been sadly lacking in this essential task. The Dialectical Biologist can be a valuable weapon in a counteroffensive against the present efforts of the international bourgeoisie and its apologists to discredit the ideas of Marxism.

### TECHNICAL READING

The Dialectical Biologist is not a single unified exposition of the dialectical method as applied to biology, but rather an anthology of scientific papers, lectures, and essays that illustrate the application of the dialectical method in practice by the authors of the book, and its interrelation with all aspects of the world. (Also included are a couple of broadly satirical contributions by one Isidore Nabi, whom some biologists believe to be a fictitious creation of Lewontin.)

Originally addressed to a technically educated audience it may be difficult going for the average lay

reader, but given a basic familiarity with biological terms it should be accessible for most. The last section, "Science as a Social Product and the Social Product of Science" (almost half the book) is the most readable for those not conversant in the technical aspects of biology.

The final chapter, titled "Conclusion: Dialectics," is the only part which was written specifically for The Dialectical Biologist. In introducing it, the authors accurately point to a chronic problem with many didactic expositions of dialectical materialism: "Formalizations of the dialectic have a way of seeming rigid and dogmatic in a way that contradicts the fluidity and historicity of the Marxist world view." Being conscious of this difficulty was apparently an aid to Levins and Lewontin and this chapter is a good short presentation of some of the basic ideas of dialectical materialism.

The rest of the book will also be helpful to the student of Marxist philosophy in getting a basic grasp of the subject. In many ways, precisely because of the problems with formal expositions of dialectical materialism, learning the method by seeing how it has been applied in practice is the best approach. That's why Marx's Capital, or Trotsky's writings, such as The History of the Russian Revolution, The Revolution Betrayed, and In Defense of Marxism, are such important textbooks in the dialectic.

### BASIC THESIS

The basic thesis presented by Levins and Lewontin is that classical biology has been severely handicapped by its adherence to the Cartesian reductionist method of analysis, in which whole systems are seen as composed of independent and preexisting parts. The parts, then, become the basic unit of study, and the reality of the whole is lost:

"'Part' and 'whole' have a special relationship to each other, in that one cannot exist without the other, any more than 'up' can exist without 'down.' What constitutes the parts is defined by the whole that is being considered. Moreover, parts acquire properties by virtue of being parts of a particular whole, properties they do not have in isolation or as parts of another whole. It is not that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, but that the parts acquire new properties. But as the parts acquire properties by being to-



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gether, they impart to the whole new properties, which are reflected in changes in the parts, and so on. Parts and wholes evolve in consequence of their relationship, and the relationship itself evolves" (emphasis in original).

One of the recurrent themes along these lines throughout the book is the interaction between organism and environment: "The simple view that the external environment changes by some dynamic of its own and is tracked by the organisms takes no account of the effect organisms have on the environment. The activity of all living forms transforms the external world in ways that both promote and inhibit the life of organisms....In this way the environment is a product of the organism, just as the organism is a product of the environment."

Levins and Lewontin point to early advances of Soviet science in this direction and cite among others I. V. Vernadsky's notion of the biosphere--the thin crust of our planet and its atmosphere where organic matter is possible. They could also have pointed to his concept of the "noosphere" which is the biosphere altered by conscious human intervention. Vernadsky proclaimed that the October revolution, by introducing conscious planning, constituted a biological revolution.

Levins and Lewontin are also extremely aware of particular practices of science as the product of the economic and social reality in which that science exists and has evolved. The chapters on "The Commoditization of Science," "The Political Economy of Agricultural Research," and "Applied Biology in the Third World" present particularly useful insights.

#### LIMITATIONS AND PROBLEMS

There are limitations to Levins's and Lewontin's work, however. The most important is their apparent lack of familiarity with the revolutionary Marxist critique of Stalinism and our analysis of the degeneration of the Russian revolution. Here they fail to apply the materialist component of dialectical materialism, which leads to important defects--most notable in their chapter on the Lysenkoist school of biology in the USSR.

They treat the Stalinist regime as if it really were, in some way, a variant of "Marxist," some kind of "socialism." Though the conclusion of this chapter is a good generalization of the



basic relationship between philosophy and empirical science, that relationship gets thoroughly confused in their overall treatment of Lysenkoism.

Their misunderstanding of Stalinism seems to make the authors feel that as Marxists they are in some way responsible for Lysenkoism and must apologize for it. This leads, in turn, to some rather superficial analyses--for example rationalizing and apologizing for Lysenko's totally unscientific experimental methods, or trying to show that his practices had no demonstrable adverse effect on Soviet agricultural production.

The chapter attempts to account for Stalinism and Lysenkoism as "errors." (Lysenkoism is referred to as a "failure" of Marxism). The criminal Stalinist policy of compulsory collectivization--which wreaked havoc on agricultural production in the USSR--the authors say, was "forced . . . to proceed" faster than could be rationally supported because of objective conditions. In an earlier chapter they incorrectly characterize this phase of Soviet history as the "socialist rationalization" of agriculture.

Levins and Lewontin treat the Lysenkoist's appeals to dialectical materialism as if what was involved was a genuine scientific and philosophical discussion and fail to understand that Stalinism and Lysenkoism had material roots in the growth of the Soviet bureaucracy and its domination of the USSR. They represented the negation of Marxism, and their invocations of philosophy were attempts to cover the substitution of police repression in the interests of a parasitic bureaucracy for genuine philosophical and scientific (not to mention political) debate. Lysenko, backed by Stalin, answered his opponent geneticists with imprisonment and execution, not with scientific experiments and counterarguments.

Other formulations reveal a lack of appreciation for the real social dynamics in the deformed and degenerated workers' states--positive references to Mao and Maoism, for example, or the use of the term "socialist countries" to describe those states.

In the chapter on "Human Nature" Levins and Lewontin reveal a certain

misunderstanding of Marx's views on the subject. Nevertheless they present a useful critique of both the conservative bourgeois notion of "human nature" as representing the ideal of capitalist society--aggressive, individualistic, acquisitive, etc., and also reject what they incorrectly characterize as the "orthodox Marxist view"--which simply consists of listing the opposite traits (cooperation, sharing, etc.) and insists that only these are the components of "true" human nature. In addition, the authors oppose the anti-materialist conception which sees human beings as a blank slate at birth, on which culture can write any message it pleases.

One senses in the chapter the logical alternative hypothesis: that human nature exists as a continuum of potential behaviors with its actual manifestation in any particular case determined by the interaction of biological factors with the social inputs of a specific culture. But Levins and Lewontin never quite explain this. Instead they seem almost to dissolve the idea of human nature entirely in their treatment of the interaction of biological and social forces.

## GENUINE MATERIALISM

The Dialectical Biologist displays an overall regard for the truth--for reality--which is an aspect of the Marxist method frequently ignored by those who claim to practice it. Yet it is basic to the very idea of materialism. We must deal with reality as it exists in an unfolding process, not as we would like it to be to fit preconceived notions.

Idealizing the natural world may serve the needs of bourgeois ideologues--indeed it is essential for their purposes--but Marxists must reject any and all fictions, whether they seem to support us ideologically or not. It is this aspect of dialectical materialism which gives it such power as a guiding force for change.

The Dialectical Biologist is a book which will prove immensely satisfying for anyone who has ever been annoyed by the all-too-frequent propagation of superstition and prejudice in the name of scientific truth and objectivity. □



## MORE LENINIST THAN LENIN

by Naomi Allen

New International, the theoretical magazine published by the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party, has finally printed Trotsky's 1927 article about his disagreement with Lenin, an article its editors held for at least eight months while they used it as part of the internal SWP slander campaign against expelled oppositionists. (See my article "A 'Suppressed' Document by Leon Trotsky," in Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, November 1985.) Nevertheless, it is possible that they published it a little sooner than they had intended after they saw it in the pages of the November 1985 Bulletin IDOM. The distortions in the introduction by Steve Clark are a result of their conscious effort to discredit both Trotsky and his defenders in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

Those who saw the Trotsky document when it was first published in the Bulletin IDOM will know that Clark's article contains its own early warning system to alert readers to falsifications and lies to come. The NI editors have meddled with the title itself, changing Trotsky's title, "The Disagreement with Lenin," to "What Were My Disagreements With Lenin on the Character of the Russian Revolution?" By changing the key words "the disagreement" to "my disagreements" they have broadened the implications and suggest a far more profound self-criticism than Trotsky actually intended.

Trotsky's aim, when he wrote the document, was to portray his historical difference with Lenin in a reasoned and unemotional way, in the context of Bolshevik history, so that it would not be blown out of proportion and used to divert attention from the crucial issues of the anti-Stalinist struggle in the 1920s. Clark's aim is just the opposite. He hopes to make as much of the historical difference as possible, the better to convince his readers of the "leftist bias" that afflicted Trotsky in the 1930s, when he sought to defend and apply his theory of permanent revolution to contemporary events. This explains the change in the document's title.

This is not at all an academic exercise to Clark and his cothinkers in the leadership of the SWP. The very same issue of New International that carries Trotsky's document contains a report by Jack Barnes to the SWP National Committee, entitled "The Coming Revolution in South Africa." The third paragraph of Barnes's report explains: "We in the Socialist Workers Party need to strip away remnants of sectarian and ultraleft obstacles that might hamper our ability to continue to turn our party outward along a working-class axis" (p. 7). The report goes on to contend that the South African revolution is not an anti-capitalist revolution but a bourgeois-democratic one.

The "sectarian and ultraleft obstacles" the SWP leadership finds so threatening are the SWP's 50-year history of support to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution--a heritage that would have prevented any party spokesperson, let alone its top leader, from proclaiming the advent of a bourgeois-democratic revolution in the age of imperialism. So Clark's introduction is designed to contribute to "demystifying" Trotsky and discrediting one of his principal theoretical contributions to Marxism in the ranks of the SWP and among its supporters. Once this is accomplished they may be more easily won over to a pre-1917 two-stage theory of revolution for South Africa and other countries. (The Barnes report on South Africa is examined more closely elsewhere in this issue, in an article by Tom Barrett.)

Clark's first paragraph contains at least two lies, and they are both purposeful.

In the very first line of his introduction, Clark claims that the Trotsky article is being published in English for the first time in the New International dated Fall 1985, which subscribers received in early December 1985. He bolsters this lie by affixing a date to his introduction--October 1985. This date is unique--no other introductions in this or any previous



issue of NI have dates. This one is dated in order to establish an earlier origin for the NI publication of Trotsky's document, much as the nouveau riche commissioned family trees to extend their claims to illustrious roots back into time. Informed readers know that Trotsky's article was actually published for the first time in English in late October 1985, in the Bulletin IDOM dated November 1985. But Clark counts on most of his readers being uninformed--after all, members of the F.I.T. are banned from SWP bookstores and forums, and party members are under severe pressure not to talk to them or read their press. By ignoring the existence of the expelled oppositionists, Clark hopes they will disappear; and by forbidding party members to have political relations with them, he can cover up for his own falsifications.

Clark's second lie claims that the translation is "by Pathfinder Press." Now, Clark knows the translation is by George Saunders, and he said so in his memorandum to the February 1985 plenum of the SWP National Committee that secretly circulated Saunders's translation of the Trotsky article along with private allegations that the article had been suppressed by people who later were expelled as oppositionists. On page 5 of the NI there is a list of "translators who helped in the production of this issue," but the name of Saunders is not included. Saunders, of course, is one of the victims of the political purge in the SWP, and was expelled along with dozens of others in early 1984. Therefore, even though Clark publishes Saunders's translation with virtually no changes at all, he feels compelled to try to hide the identity of the translator.

Such nickel and dime falsifications not only give readers an accurate character reference to Clark, but also provide them with an idea of what to expect from him on the bigger, more substantial issues.

After this inauspicious beginning, Clark outlines the circumstances surrounding the writing of this document, neglecting to mention the impending split with the Zinovievists under pressure from the Stalinists. He passes in silence over the central issue of the final part of Trotsky's article--where Trotsky argues that the party ranks and leaders were educated before 1917 in the democratic dictatorship (that is, the bourgeois character of the Russian revo-

lution) and that, as a result of that miseducation, many of them went over to support for the Provisional Government in 1917. Clark has nothing to say to this, except to refer readers in a footnote "for a different view of these events" to Doug Jenness's article "Our Political Continuity with Bolshevism."

The bulk of Clark's introduction consists of repetition of the SWP leaders' rethinking of Bolshevik history. This rethinking has taken place not quite by chance but rather in the light of their drive to eliminate "obstacles" to an international realignment with elements who still adhere to the official Stalinist version of that history--obstacles such as the theory of permanent revolution. Thus, the SWP leadership can portray itself as balanced--criticizing Stalin on the one hand, and Trotsky on the other--while emerging as more Leninist than Lenin (who in 1917 repudiated the formula "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" as outlived and insisted on solving the bourgeois-democratic tasks through a dictatorship of the proletariat). □

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## HOW HISTORY IS REWRITTEN ON WEST STREET

by Chester Hofla

The leaders of the SWP started rewriting the history of the Fourth International and the SWP around six years ago, and they show no sign of stopping now.

Their latest concoction, or invention, is that the FI and the SWP underwent a major political reorientation in the early 1960s as a result of the Cuban revolution--"a reorientation that continues" today-- and that this reorientation was connected with recognition of defects in the FI's theory of permanent revolution.

The assignment for floating this version of history was given to Doug Jenness, editor of Intercontinental Press and a member in good standing of the SWP's central leadership team around Jack Barnes.

Jenness begins his job in an article he wrote about the Australian Socialist Workers Party's disaffiliation from the FI last August (IP, Sept. 23, p. 561). The Australians complained that the FI had not made a "fundamental reorientation" following the Cuban revolution, and Jenness counters them by asserting that they did make such a reorientation:

"But there is nothing that has stamped the Fourth International more in the past quarter century than the political reorientation that it began in the early 1960s in response to the Cuban revolution -- a reorientation that continues." He then lists seven ways in which all revolutionaries clarified their understanding of the revolutionary process, including the role of the peasantry, guerrilla warfare, political convergence, the decisive weight of the Soviet workers state, etc.

Of course revolutionaries learned from the Cuban revolution, as they can and must from all revolutions. But that this was the most important thing that happened to the FI since the early 1960s, that this led to a major political reorientation by the FI in the 1960s, and that it still continues--where, in the voluminous literature of the FI and the SWP is there the slightest documentary evidence to support this claim?

Before we turn to the literature, let us continue with Jenness's second foray, in the article about the split in the British Healyite movement (IP, Dec. 2, p.726): "The Cuban revolution did not develop in the way that had been expected by the world Trotskyist movement, that is, on the basis of the theory of 'permanent revolution.' The majority of forces who considered themselves part of the Fourth International, however, wholeheartedly embraced the revolution and began to adjust their theory to take account of the way the class struggle was actually unfolding."

This passage is more explicit than those in the Sept. 23 article, and expresses the logic that was unstated there. But the passages have to be taken together. The Barnesite method is to unveil its revisions a little at a time. The Dec. 2 passage implies or suggests that a majority of the FI thought the Cuban revolution took place and developed in contradiction to the theory of permanent revolution, and that they began to adjust this theory in the early 1960s; therefore the big reorientation claimed in the Sept. 23 article.

But the implication is false. Jenness and the Barnes group now think the Cuban revolution was inconsistent with the theory of permanent revolution; but throughout the 1960s (and 70s) the majority of the FI and SWP (including the leaders of the present Barnes group) thought and said over and over again that the Cuban revolution confirmed the theory of permanent revolution. What motive could they have had then for revising this theory?

Most of the evidence I will cite is from a single book, Dynamics of World Revolution Today (Pathfinder Press, 1974). This was prepared by the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction for use at the 1974 world congress of the FI, and fully incorporated the ideas of the SWP leadership at that time. The first document in the book is "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement," adopted by the SWP Political Committee in March 1963; it advocated ending a ten-year split in the International, and



listed 16 areas of agreement on both sides in the movement.

Point 12 said that in the colonial countries it is impossible "to solve the historic problems of social, economic, and cultural liberation and development without overthrowing capitalism as well as breaking the grip of imperialism. The colonial revolution therefore tends to flow into the channel of permanent revolution, beginning with a radical agrarian reform and heading toward the expropriation of imperialist holdings and 'national' capitalist property, the establishment of a workers state and a planned economy." (p. 19)

The FI was reunified at a world congress in June 1963. Its principal document was a resolution entitled "Dynamics of World Revolution Today." If the big reorientation Jenness claims took place in the early 60s would be recorded anywhere, it would be in this resolution. Instead, we find the following:

"At the beginning of the twentieth century, Trotsky, in 1905, in his theory of permanent revolution, which held that the working class would find itself compelled to carry out tasks historically belonging to the bourgeoisie, and Lenin, in 1914, in his theory of imperialism, which included the view that the imperialist chain would break first at its weakest link, showed that they had come to understand the main consequence of the law of uneven and combined development; namely, that the proletariat might well come to power first in a backward country as a result of the contradictions of the world capitalist system as a whole." (pp. 25-26)

"Basically, the colonial revolution is the irrepressible tendency of these two billion human beings to become at last the masters and builders of their own destiny. The fact that this is socially possible only through a workers' state provides the objective basis for the tendency of the colonial revolution to move into the tracks of permanent revolution." (pp. 30-31)

The final document in the book, "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International," intended for the 1974 world congress, was written primarily by Joseph Hansen and Jack Barnes. Here is one passage from it: "The problem of wresting power from the bourgeoisie was solved in theory at the beginning of this century by two invaluable contributions to Marxism--Lenin's plan for the construction of a vanguard party and Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution.

More importantly, as World War I drew to a close, the Bolshevik team they led in Russia solved it practically. The exemplary action of the Bolsheviks still constitutes the best and most enlightening model for study and emulation by revolutionists everywhere." (p. 119)

Unless Jenness produces some evidence for his claim, he has to be branded as a distorter of party history. And a clumsy distorter at that. The main cadres of the SWP and the FI not only did not begin to revise the theory of permanent revolution after the Cuban revolution--they believed and said and wrote that the Cuban revolution was a confirmation of the theory of permanent revolution. Here, for example, is a passage by Joseph Hansen, author of most SWP documents on Cuba in the 1960s, in an article entitled "Adolfo Gilly, Fidel Castro, and the Fourth International," which appeared in World Outlook (predecessor of Intercontinental Press) April 15, 1966:

"The specific contribution to revolutionary theory that has become labelled as 'Trotskyism,' is not merely unyielding recognition of the necessity for socialist revolution on a world scale -- the ultraleft sectarians do this in all sincerity and they should be given credit for it.

"What Trotskyism offers is a transitional political approach, the methodical search for points of contact with masses of workers and peasants who may have a backward outlook, who may be under the influence of conservative or demagogic leaders or opportunist parties. The approach consists of finding slogans, aims, or suggested measures that are acceptable to the masses at their given level of political development but which nevertheless correspond to objective necessities and which, once undertaken, tend to carry them toward socialist revolution and full political consciousness.

"This transitional approach is applicable and required in the imperialist countries but has special meaning in the underdeveloped areas of the world where feudal conditions do exist, where the bourgeoisie has failed to carry out the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, or where the struggle against imperialist domination leads to nationalist moods.

"In tribute to Marx, who formulated the germinal idea, Trotsky named this theory, which permeates his writings and which guided all his political activities from 1905 on, the theory of 'permanent revolution.' The theory of perma-



ment revolution is not at all something exotic. It was applied for the first time in the Russian revolution of 1917, where it provided the guidelines for taking the struggle against feudalistic tsarism into the socialistic phase that culminated in the establishment of the first workers' state in history.

"It provides an incomparable key to understanding the inner logic of the revolutionary events of our time. It is very much involved in the problem under discussion -- the question of extending the Cuban revolution. The Cubans, in fact, really owe it to themselves to

become acquainted with the theory. They will be surprised to discover how well Trotsky foresaw the logic of the revolution they carried out by feeling their way through the more costly method of trial and error."

Hansen still had these ideas about permanent revolution in 1978 when the 1966 article was reprinted in his book Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution (Pathfinder Press, 1978, pp. 330-31) and up to his death in 1979. It was only after this that the Barnes group began to disassociate itself from permanent revolution. □

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## ON REGROUPMENT AND PROGRAM: A RESPONSE TO STEVE BLOOM

by Mike Patrick

In issue Number 23 of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, Steve Bloom offers a sweeping critique of an article by Les Evans that appeared in the founding issue (August-September) of Socialist Unity, a journal published by the organization of the same name.

Les Evans's article entitled "The Case for a Socialist Alternative" provides a political rationale for the "regroupment" process currently under way between three organizations on the American left, Socialist Unity, the International Socialists, and Workers Power, as well as several smaller local socialist collectives and a number of unaffiliated Marxists. As is the case with Steve's organization, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, the majority of Socialist Unity's members were undemocratically expelled from the Socialist Workers Party. Workers Power's members include both former members of the SWP and former members of the International Socialists. All three organizations have their origins in the unitary Trotskyist movement in the United States that existed from 1928 to 1940.

Steve's criticisms of Les Evans's perspectives for regroupment are threefold: first, he asserts that the present period with its downturn in the level of the class struggle is not conducive to regroupment; secondly, he suggests that the process of regroupment is far less important than continuing efforts to influence the ranks of the Socialist Workers Party with respect to important changes that have occurred in the SWP's program over the past half-decade; and third, and perhaps most important, Steve contends that Les Evans and others involved in the regroupment process have not paid sufficient attention to the primacy of program as the sine qua non of the construction of a revolutionary organization.

Let us systematically address Steve's criticisms of Les Evans's article.

We shall at once concede Steve's argument that periods of retreat for the class struggle may not be the most pro-

pitious times to launch a process of regrouping revolutionary socialists in a common organization. We of course wish that the times were better. Undoubtedly, the present circumstances will create difficulties for the regroupment process.

However, the present political climate has not been conducive to the building of existing revolutionary organizations, either -- witness the dramatic shrinking of the SWP, not to mention the wholesale destruction of a myriad of other left organizations that existed in the 1960s and 70s. Yet, we hope that no one will advance the argument that because "times aren't good," that we should give up as impossible the project of building a revolutionary organization. Yet, Steve asks us to accept precisely that idea with respect to unifying currently separate revolutionary organizations.

Steve's maxim that there can be no regroupments outside of periods of radicalization does not correspond to the reality of several successful regroupments that have taken place during periods of quiescence in the class struggle. The Mexican Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT) was created by a unification of separate pro-Fourth International organizations. From the beginning, it sought unification where feasible with other revolutionary currents, including those that were outside the Fourth International. It did not demand prior agreement from these organizations on a whole series of programmatic points -- including the question of the need for a revolutionary international or the nature of the Cuban regime. Its approach to regroupment predated the recent period during which its influence has grown so dramatically.

Similarly, the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) unified with an organization of 300, the Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs (OCT), which held a bureaucratic collectivist analysis of the Soviet Union. While there have been upturns and downturns in the class struggle in the re-



cent period in France, it would be hard to discern an immediate connection between the tempo of the class struggle and the regroupment process in France.

Moreover, in West Germany, our comrades of the International Marxist Group (GIM) will most likely unify with a formerly Maoist current, the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). Again, we see no major class battles in West Germany that would bear out Steve's contention that such regroupments can only be accomplished successfully during upturns.

Paradoxically, it is the current ebb of the class struggle in the United States that has created the preconditions for such a regroupment process. Since the zenith of the radicalization of the 1960s, and in the wake of the end of the movement against the war in Vietnam, virtually the entire left in the United States has collapsed or is in a severe crisis. Thousands of radicals, socialists, and other militants have either withdrawn from the political arena entirely, have enlisted under the banner of the Democratic Party, or have become profoundly demoralized or cynical.

Entire organizations have disappeared without a trace. While the Maoist current suffered the most devastating disintegration, no organization on the left was immune to the generalized decline of the radicalization of the 1960s. Virtually every group lost large numbers of members or otherwise declined.

Thus the present cadres of the International Socialists, Workers Power, and Socialist Unity, while numerically small, are survivors who, to date, have managed to weather the storm, neither succumbing to the lure of the Democratic Party nor retreating to the sidelines. The disintegration of the left was marked by a series of intense factional battles within many organizations, including both the IS and the SWP, which made the survivors all the more cognizant of the subjective necessity of the unity of the left around a broad common program and all the more committed to building an organization united around a common approach to the most salient questions confronting the left both in the United States and globally.

It is precisely the concrete experience over the past decade of the militants who comprise IS, WP, and SU that has caused them to reject the sectarian "we alone are the vanguard" concept that has permeated and debilitated the American left for far too long; prompted them to reassess the relationship between

program and organization; and impelled them to attempt to construct an organization around a program that corresponds both to the objective needs of the class struggle and to contemporary American reality. Thus, while the experience and commitment of several hundred socialist militants is admittedly no substitute for a heightened tempo of the class struggle, the political capital accumulated by the comrades involved in the regroupment process makes the process itself much more tenable than Steve's dismissive posture allows.

As for Steve's notion that a continuing engagement with the Socialist Workers Party is more important than any regroupment process, one might suggest that the construction of a viable alternative to the SWP through regrouping revolutionary socialists around a broad class struggle program may well have a more salutary effect upon the SWP's ranks than a propaganda campaign of the sort currently carried on by the comrades of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

Moreover, Steve is wrong when he assigns as the primary problem of the SWP its recent programmatic revisions abstracted from the context in which these revisions were adopted. By themselves, the revisions are, of course, the product of the decline of the radicalization of the 1960s and a disorientation in the face of a new world situation. Yet, the ability of the rank and file to accept these revisions and their grotesque organizational consequences was a product of a gradual tightening of the SWP's norms and of its treatment of dissident tendencies that did not begin all of a sudden in 1981.

In the early 1960s, the SWP had been involved in several faction fights, and a number of party leaders insisted that certain changes be made in the SWP's organizational norms. The 1965 organizational resolution was the result of these demands for change. We think that James P. Cannon's 1966 letters reveal his uneasiness, in no uncertain terms, about these changes. For its part, the Barnes leadership today describes the SWP's pre-1965 norms as part of a detour made necessary by the party's weakness in the 1950s and traces the beginning of the correction of these overly democratic tendencies to the 1965 organizational resolution.

Without the preparatory groundwork laid by the SWP leadership in expelling the Internationalist Tendency in 1974, the SWP could not possibly have expelled the opposition now represented by the



F.I.T., SA, and SU without so much as a whimper by those who remain in the SWP. And today, the SWP's bureaucratic regime has become so thoroughly consolidated that it is essentially meaningless to continue a political project oriented toward convincing rank and file members of the SWP that something is amiss, whether it be political or organizational. In all likelihood, internal contradictions within the SWP will emerge, but they will have a logic and dynamic of their own. In short, contrary to what Steve contends, the decline of the SWP was not due to its programmatic revisions per se, but was a result of the same political climate that confounded the entire left compounded by its wholesale waste of cadre through a series of bureaucratic purges of hundreds of members who disagreed with the SWP leadership.

Despite the SWP's bureaucratic regime, it will continue to have a presence on the left. It has ample financial resources, and a core of cadre. Moreover, its overriding political methodology and practice, which are essentially pragmatic, and a widely situated geographical placement will allow it to continue to recruit even in these less than optimal times. However, to spend one's energies in attempting to influence the ranks of the SWP, given its bureaucratization, is an exercise in futility. Far better to build an alternative political organization.

Finally, and most importantly, Steve takes Les Evans to task for allegedly slighting the importance of program in the construction of a revolutionary organization. What is apparent, however, is that his use of the term program is thoroughly abstract. He never defines what he means by program. And this is quite understandable because within the historical tradition of American Trotskyism, the concept of program has come to mean something quite different than what Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, and Trotsky had in mind. For them, a program was a crystallization or distillation of the objective needs of the working class and the oppressed masses at any given point. For those comrades who wish to construct a pre-1979 version of the SWP, the concept of program has come to resemble a club sandwich. Rather than being a set of positions that reflect the reality of the class struggle, while concurrently linking the possibility of subjective intervention with objective conditions, program has come to mean a linear catalog of all past positions

assumed by an organization and its historical antecedents.

Perhaps this is the most important consideration: that a program is not a catalog of all positions previously adopted by an organization nor an amalgam of various theoretical, strategic, or tactical positions. There is no such thing as a correct historical program per se. Rather, we have a method that is used to comprehend material reality in order to fashion a program that meets the needs of the masses, both historically and conjuncturally. Moreover, a program is not an undifferentiated whole. At different times some programmatic positions are more central than others. Thus the three organizations involved in the regroupment process have concluded that a general agreement on the broad program outlined below is far more important than secondary differences over the class nature of the Soviet Union.

The three organizations in the regroupment process are in fact coming together around a common program; moreover, a program that embodies clear positions on the most central questions that have faced the left during the immediate past period. Indeed, the program that follows provides a very real cutting edge for the entire American left.

#### A PROGRAM FOR REGROUPMENT

(1) **For socialist democracy**--Whether it be in the USSR, Poland, or Latin America, or in the internal life of revolutionary organizations.

(2) **For independent working class political action**--No support for the Democratic Party or its candidates. One of the most critical needs of the working class is to have a means of political expression of its own, rather than being trapped in one (or both) of the major bourgeois parties. To enter, support, or endorse the Democratic Party or any of its candidates stands in contradiction to the expressed strategic goal of the objective need for an independent working class political party.

(3) **For a full and complete social transformation of society; against reformism** -- In order to solve the complex and immediate problems posed by capitalism as a social system, it is necessary that it be abolished and replaced with a new social system. All previous historical experience has revealed that such a transformation does



not happen without a rupture of existing class relations. It is not the purpose of socialists to administer capitalism more efficiently or more humanely. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that capitalism will abolish itself of its own volition or simply wither away.

**(4) For revolutionary internationalism--** For full support to the struggles of colonial and semicolonial peoples and others who are oppressed by imperialism. Concretely, this means building a movement in the United States against U.S. intervention in Latin America, and a movement against apartheid in South Africa. This means solidarity with the struggles of the oppressed whether they be in the West Bank, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, or Poland.

**(5) For solidarity with the oppressed in the United States--** For support for the struggles of the working class, women, Blacks, Hispanics, gays, and other oppressed sectors in the United States.

Is this not a program around which socialist militants can rally? This program responds to the major questions that have faced the American left during the past decade: (1) the question of whether or not to support Polish Solidarity; (2) the question of the profound and positive importance of the Nicaraguan revolution; (3) the question of whether to support Jesse Jackson and the Democratic Party in 1983-84.

We wish to stress that we heartily welcome and appreciate this opportunity to respond to Comrade Steve's article. It is precisely through such fraternal exchanges and discussion that the American left can begin the process of reconstituting itself around a clear program of opposition to the inhumanity of American capitalism and its imperialist ventures abroad.

Further, we would warmly welcome and encourage a discussion with the comrades of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency over the critical issues facing the American left and the working class and oppressed sectors in the United States. □

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## LILLIAN CURTISS, 1911-1985

On December 10, 1985, Lillian Curtiss, a lifelong activist in the socialist movement and for many years a leading member of the SWP, died while in the hospital awaiting surgery for cancer. Below are a number of items which will help to give an appreciation of her life and the many contributions she made to the workers movement. Included are the text of a speech which she gave at a celebration of her fiftieth anniversary in the struggle for socialism in 1977; her statement of resignation from the SWP in 1983; and a report about the memorial meeting which was held in Los Angeles on December 29.

Lillian resigned from the SWP, deeply saddened by the developments in the party which forced this course upon her. She was also dismayed by the further fragmentation of the Fourth Internationalist movement in the United

States which occurred after the mass expulsions from the party. Her hope was that the expelled members could work together in a common organization. With the formation of separate groups (Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency), she decided not to formally join either. She attended forums and events organized by Socialist Action and retained good relations with a range of political activists and organizations. Her closest political ties were with the F.I.T. although she did not agree with its entire orientation. Lillian regularly attended meetings of the F.I.T. local organizing committee in Los Angeles, contributed financially, helped out with various campaigns and activities, and collaborated with F.I.T. members in the anti-intervention movement.

### FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SPEECH

I've listened to countless speeches during more than half a century—I've heard orators like Eugene V. Debs and James P. Cannon, and also speeches that would have been better left unspoken. Yet I've never overcome my irrational fear of the public platform and even of such gatherings as this, made up of comrades, family, and friends.

Bear with me, then, for a few moments of some very subjective comments. I obviously cannot cover fifty years of history in five minutes.

I was one of the lucky ones born into a radical family and knew of socialism and trade unionism from childhood, though I did not join the Young People's Socialist League (known as the Yipsels) until 1926 when I was fifteen.

As compared to the present, the Socialist Party and the Yipsels were relatively large organizations, with tens of thousands of members, including many foreign-language branches. They had a considerable influence in the leadership and membership of many trade unions, particularly in the garment industry.

The large Jewish fraternal organization, the Workmen's Circle, considered itself a socialist organization. Not all the members were active, but on the other hand, hundreds of thousands of nonmembers considered themselves

socialists and voted for the socialist ticket.

The year before I joined in Los Angeles, we held a meeting for Gene Debs in the Hollywood Bowl. The bowl was smaller than it is now, but even the newspapers reported an attendance of over 3,000.

Unfortunately, life drew most of those socialists and their offspring in other directions.

In 1926 I hoped and expected to see the realization of our slogan, "Socialism in our time." We had so reasonable a plan for eliminating hunger, exploitation, oppression, war, and countless other evils. It was incomprehensible to me that workers would not accept so clear a solution as the social ownership of the means of production and of internationalism.

I knew I had to be a part of effecting the change.

I viewed it so simply that I thought it was just a matter of getting the word out. I worried about the dread artillery—how could we fight cannons with our seemingly paltry weapons?

Today, we all know that not only technologically are the weapons incomparably more powerful, but the economic and political weapons are also more sophisticated. (It didn't take me fifty years to learn that the media is a more powerful weapon than the cannon.)

Those who operate these weapons and those who produce the goods that people require for a full and productive life are all workers. When we, the workers, recognize this, we will be the greatest power in the world, and I believe it now as I did over fifty years ago.

In 1937 I left the SP with the Trotskyists. Today there still remain four members in the Los Angeles SWP local who left the SP as Trotskyists: Howard Rosen, Mit and Ann Snipper, and I.

But aside from doing what needed to be done and what I wanted to do, I have had an interesting and exciting life in the party. The daily give-and-take of working toward a common goal with interesting, talented, and dedicated people has forged lifelong and very deep relationships. I have no illusions that this does not happen in other fields of endeavor, but there are added dimensions in the revolutionary movement—developing and implementing ideas and activities geared to fundamental change affecting all aspects of life—that have a profound effect on all of us. We are all the flawed products of capitalism, but in striving to build a socialist world, our efforts have given added meaning to all our lives, whether we stayed with it for five or fifty years.

There were special bonuses along the



way in fighting the good fight—each battle that we waged involved me deeply and personally (even though I was not always on the bloody battlefield) whether it was running for state assembly, fighting fascism and racism, the Spanish civil war, our work in the Committee for European Workers' Relief, building the CIO, working in the SWP National Office, working with Trotsky, the association with comrades from other lands, managing Pioneer Publishers (Pathfinder's ancestor), participating in the civil rights and antiwar movements. None of these was of personal benefit, yet I

gained immeasurably from them.

Among the many comrades who have so greatly enriched my years in the movement, I must pay special tribute to two. My mother joined the Bund as a young woman in Russia, and was still a member of the SP until her death eleven years ago at the age of eighty-four. Though we often disagreed, I was very proud of her as a person and as a woman of principle.

And over his protestations, I must give public recognition to Charlie Curtiss. Without his wholehearted understanding and support, in spite of political differences, my role might

have been a very different one and certainly a far less happy one.

It takes all kinds of contributions to achieve a revolution. I'm glad I've had the opportunity to add my small bit, and I'm glad I've lived to see this day and to thank the movement for the opportunities it has given me to work for a better world rather than for personal acquisition or recognition. Knowing the system was warping our lives, it is gratifying and rewarding to have joined hands with my comrades in the task of changing it.

I strongly recommend it as a way of life.

## STATEMENT OF RESIGNATION FROM SWP

I have always been proud of being a member of the SWP. Like the rest of you, my life has probably been much different than it might have been without the party--certainly much richer and more fulfilling.

I have been part of the party for longer than most of you have been alive. I have had sustenance from the SWP. It has been vital to me. Many of you know that feeling.

Now the SWP has changed and I find myself on unfamiliar terrain.

The party has undergone many factional struggles in almost a half-century of its existence, with countless hours of discussion, oral and written. Thousands of harsh things were said on both sides, but the party survived. One source of my great pride in the SWP was that these discussions did take place. We did not have to fear the consequence of expressing a contrary opinion.

We all know that is no longer the case. Any expression can be used to rid the party of a comrade who is at all

critical of party work, or its direction, or a political position.

Expelling seasoned, devoted and able comrades for not condemning others who expressed, or failed to express, their opinions is a case in point.

It takes a very long time to develop good cadres and I grieve to think of the great human resources the SWP has lost and thrown away in the last few years. I can only hope that most of these comrades are finding other arenas in which to give of their talents and experience in order to serve the movement.

Coming to recognize that I cannot function in the SWP under these conditions has been an extremely painful experience--an amputation of sorts. I'll recover, but life will not be the same.

I hope the party will recover from its afflictions. Certainly I wish it a speedy recovery, but until that takes place I need to leave it to maintain my own integrity.

I herewith tender my resignation.

## MEMORIAL MEETING

A memorial meeting, sponsored by friends, family, and comrades of Lillian Curtiss took place in Los Angeles on December 29. One hundred twenty attended, from all parts of Northern and Southern California. Some made the trip from Mexico because they had established a lifelong friendship with Lillian in 1938, when she spent a number of months in that country as part of Trotsky's secretariat. A display at the meeting included photos of her with Trotsky during that time.

Speakers at the meeting were Lillian's son, David; daughter, Carolyn; and friend, Walta Ross; along with Margaret Fagin, Sherry Frumkin, Lew McCammon, and Felix Ibarra, who were political as well as personal associates. In a brochure prepared by the family as a memento of the meeting, it is noted that

"speakers recalled her humor, gentleness, kindness, comradeship and integrity."

Two messages read--among many received from across the United States, Europe, and Mexico--were by David Herreshoff and Fred Halstead. Most of the greetings, however, could not be included as part of the formal program.

The speakers and messages were followed by an open mike, and many of those in attendance said a few words: Kathleen O'Nan, Asher Harer, Matthew Ross, Max Goldman, David Cooper, Evelyn Sell, Della Rossa, and Ruth Harer. The memorial ended with the playing of "Bandiera Rossa," a favorite revolutionary song of Lillian's.

On April 19th, a tree-planting in her honor will take place in Los Angeles's Elysian Park.



## MILTON SNIPPER, 1912-1985

by Walter Lippmann

Milton Snipper, a lifelong revolutionary socialist and trade union activist, and a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party, died of a heart attack on December 9, 1985, following extended illness. He is survived by his wife Ann, and his children Bitsy and Julius.

On December 14, 73 friends, colleagues, and family members gathered at Ann Snipper's home to pay tribute to and celebrate the life of a remarkable working class leader. The gathering was attended by members of the four components of the Fourth Internationalist movement in the United States. Family and political associates spoke of the political and personal strengths of Mitt Snipper which were expressed in many ways.

The gathering was opened by Theodore Edwards, a longtime friend and collaborator of Mitt. Following are excerpts from his eulogy:

"I think two great traditions united in his person. The first tradition was that of small-town America, which shaped his personality. Mitt embodied what I think was perhaps all that was admirable and progressive in that bygone America of small towns and rural activities: honesty, openness, hospitality, cheerfulness, modesty, optimism, resourcefulness and self-reliance.

"The other tradition which shaped Mitt was his radical Jewish working class background. He was a garment worker all his life, a leader in his union, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and a veteran of many strike struggles.

"As a young socialist, he joined the American Trotskyist movement. He was also a political leader in his own right in that movement. He was a person whose opinions were listened to with respect, for he always had something to contribute worthy of consideration. And not just on trade union questions, but on all of the many political questions which have agitated and concerned the Trotskyist movement over the many decades of its existence.

"To the very end, he had very strong opinions on all the questions in dispute, and especially the current

ones. And also, to the very end, he never deviated from his lifelong goal of a world socialist society as the whole answer, and as the only way ahead for all of humanity."

Although Mitt Snipper's formal education ended with his high school graduation, many remarked on the universality of his knowledge, both intellectual and practical. One speaker commented:

"He was a persistent and patient student of ideas. He never made up his mind about any controversy without first having studied all pertinent material. He was an avid reader, not only of political material, but was a student of history and anthropology...I know of few university graduates who were as educated, or who continued their education during their lifetime, as did Mitt."

Another speaker pointed to specific traits of character which made Mitt a particularly outstanding working class leader:

"He didn't think of himself first. He thought of issues; he thought of problems; he thought of questions. And above all, he thought of people. I don't know if I should say above all, but equally, certainly, he thought of other people. And it's a very rare quality."

Mitt Snipper was an activist and a member of the Executive Board of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in Los Angeles for many years through the 1940s and the early 1950s. At the same time, he was an activist and an executive committee member in the L.A. branch of the Socialist Workers Party until the early 1960s. And though he withdrew from daily activity in the organization, he was always very well informed about both the practical work of the organization, and the real situation in the labor movement, with which he was intimately familiar.

Mitt Snipper was a committed Marxist and Trotskyist for all of his adult life. Because of these convictions, he was expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in January 1984. And while he did not join any of the organizations which arose after the purge, he remained a committed partisan of the Marxist and Trotskyist ideas to which he had dedicated his life.



## WORLD CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS

Thanks for alerting us to the publication in English of the resolutions adopted by the 1985 world congress of the Fourth International.

As you said, it is really a book although it is called a special issue of International Viewpoint. We here have had a chance so far only to skim through it, marking up the places we want to return to for further consideration or discussion.

I don't agree with every point in it, but it certainly raises the major questions facing us, and usually gives the right answers, in my opinion. You are absolutely right in saying that the Fourth International is the only really revolutionary international in existence.

Independents  
New Jersey

## I.V. SPECIAL ISSUE CORRECTION

The special International Viewpoint publication containing the world congress resolutions of 1985 (110 pp., large format) can be ordered for \$6 (postage included) from International Viewpoint, P. O. Box 1824, New York, NY 10009.

Those who have this book or intend to get it will be interested to learn of a correction that is needed on one page, not discovered until after publication. The final paragraph of point 47, page 25 (concerning tasks in the semi-colonial and semi-industrialized countries), should be replaced by the version adopted by vote at the world congress as follows:

"Furthermore, in certain countries where repression is intense, the revolutionary road can pass through direct military activity of the revolutionary activity developing into mass revolutionary war against the regime in power, as long as this organisation has the forces and implantation necessary to carry through this orientation without falling into adventurism or 'putschism.' There is no general 'recipe' for revolution, but rather a more or less specific and original path in each country, depending on the actual situation. Revolutionary Marxists in each country should make a specific analysis of the specific situation, and on the basis of this analysis, determine the national strategy for revolution, for which they will fight alongside the other revolutionary forces who share their conclusions."

## WEIRD DOINGS

In the last few years, as the SWP leadership is lurching about, it has done some pretty weird things. The latest events show that in this area they are proceeding full-steam ahead to the point of absurdity.

The Dec. 27 Militant reported about three memorial meetings for Ray Sparrow held by the SWP in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. The article was over two full pages long but failed to include the information that admission to these meetings was by invitation only!

Yes, incredible as it sounds, for the first time in more than a century of the Marxist movement, a memorial meeting was held for a dedicated militant and the meeting was closed to the public, except for those who were expressly invited to attend by word of mouth (since no public notice of the meeting was distributed).

Attendance of course was curtailed as a result. Sparrow was well known in these three cities, and many non-SWP members would have wanted to attend a meeting to pay tribute to him. In San Francisco friends who don't belong to the SWP organized a meeting open to the public the same weekend as the SWP's invitation-only gathering, and it was almost twice as large as the SWP's.

What explains this schizophrenic behavior--holding a meeting to tell about Sparrow, but holding it in such a way that the fewest possible number of people would hear what was told? The answer is: the SWP's two-year-old "exclusion policy." (Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky never had an exclusion policy, and that was why they never innovated memorial meetings by invitation only, leaving that distinction to the SWP leadership in December 1985.)

Two years ago the SWP leaders bureaucratically expelled a large number of members who objected, or might object, to the leadership's growing rejection of Trotskyism and embrace of Castroism and to its calls for a "new International" that would replace the Fourth International. To prevent any discussion or fraternization between SWP members and the expellees, the SWP leadership dubbed the latter splitters, disrupters, and provocateurs and ordered them to be barred from any SWP forum, rally, or bookstore. That's the exclusion policy.

But how would it look if people showed up for a memorial meeting and



were excluded from that? It wouldn't look good, the SWP leaders decided in New York, and so the invitation-only policy was born, as a way of avoiding breaches in the exclusion policy.

How much longer are the SWP members going to let their leaders make them look like fools?

San Franciscan

## REGRET AND ANGER

It is with regret and some anger that I could not attend the N.Y. memorial meeting for Ray Sparrow. As a member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency I am excluded from attending Socialist Workers Party sponsored events. This recent policy is not in the tradition of the party or the Trotskyist movement but stems from a sectarian and factional leadership that seeks to isolate the membership from competing ideas and program. This also represents their lack of confidence in their own policies.

Ray was a disciplined party loyalist who as far as I know never expressed sympathy for our tendency; but I doubt that he would have freely willed that I should have been denied access to the memorial meeting. It is with fond memory that I recall my first opportunity to know Ray Sparrow. In 1949-50 at the crest of the McCarthy period I was fired from my job in industry as a "poor security risk for association with the SWP." For one year I found myself black-listed and was unable to get work. During this rather distressing period Ray arrived in Philadelphia, having just completed a dangerous steel erection job on the Delaware Bay Bridge as a cable splicer. Without previous acquaintance he sought me out and went out of his way to help me find some part-time work. It was during this period that I got to know him. Ray had a wonderful penchant for story telling and he enjoyed discussing politics. He was a creative, skilled construction worker-engineer, an educator for the party, a communist, a true comrade and human being from a generation of revolutionary socialists who would never have tolerated the undemocratic, Stalinist-like tactics of the Barnes splinter faction. I know that while he did not always agree with the leadership of the party, he did not openly criticize that leadership. At the 1981 convention in an unguarded moment he expressed to me irritation at some particular action of Barnes.

It is with a feeling of deep regret that I view the loss of Ray Sparrow who

has made an important contribution to the building of the international workers movement and the Socialist Workers Party.

Haskell Berman

## A SAD PART OF THE RECORD

It is true, as your obituary of Ray Sparrow said [December 1985], that after James P. Cannon's death in 1974, Sparrow used to observe that he had acquired the distinction of having the longest service in the Trotskyist movement of any living SWP member.

But Sparrow was wrong about this. That distinction belonged and belongs to George Novack, who joined our movement in 1933. Sparrow joined the Spartacus Youth Clubs in 1934.

I think the obituary, in addition to reporting that Sparrow sometimes grumbled about the present SWP leadership, should have added that he also accepted its purge of many good Trotskyists two-three years ago. That was his mistake. It doesn't negate his many contributions, but it is a (sad) part of his record.

G.B.  
New York

## ALARM BELLS

When I read the articles by Steve Bloom on the transitional program in Bulletin IDOM Nos. 21 and 24 I remember being a little skeptical about one of his assertions--that the SWP leadership was abandoning the transitional method and the transitional program and substituting for them the old concept of a "minimum" and "maximum" program. But then I read Jack Barnes's latest contribution in New Internationalist (Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1985), "The Coming Revolution in South Africa." On page 19 he writes: "The Freedom Charter is a solid program for the national, democratic revolution in South Africa. . . . And it is the minimum program of a revolutionary workers' party, of a communist party, in South Africa today" (emphasis added). If that isn't enough to make the point, he repeats himself even more clearly on pages 21-22: "A communist party can and will be built around a socialist program, but it will also embrace the Freedom Charter as its minimum program" (emphasis added).

Having been a member of the SWP for a long time and being thoroughly ac-



quainted with the way the Barnes leadership introduces ideas through the side door--implying them or stating them in passing instead of presenting them forthrightly--these two sentences set off alarm bells for me. I hope they also do so for those who remain in the party (as indeed this whole deplorable report on South Africa should).

But I also find myself wondering about what's behind this. If the Barnes leadership is now consciously adopting the method of the "minimum and maximum program" how can they justify it? Certainly not by returning to the first four congresses of the Comintern, which have become their source for holy revelations on a "theoretical" plane. To justify the idea of a "minimum and maximum program" they must go back even further, to the completely discredited strategic approach of the pre-World War I Second International. This seems to be totally inconsistent with the rest of their trajectory. Can anyone help me to figure out what's going on here?

Perplexed

Editors' reply--The main thing to understand about the theoretical efforts of the present SWP leadership is that they are completely eclectic and purely empirical. There is no consistency to their approach. They grab onto whatever ideas seem to fit at the moment in their flight away from a revolutionary Marxist analysis and their effort to find some alternative to the program and organization of the Fourth International. Ideas that they embrace at one moment can be thrown away a short time later without the slightest hesitation, or even awareness, of the contradictions involved.

Their infatuation with the first four congresses of the Comintern has been useful in exalting "Leninism" to

the disparagement of "Trotskyism." But this in no way indicates a genuine commitment. One of the most interesting features of the Barnes leadership's approach is its apparent belief that the further back we go in time, the more authoritative the basic Marxist classics become. (This, of course, is the exact opposite of the way program and theory actually develop.) Lenin, as we know, is far more authoritative than Trotsky in their eyes. Lenin before 1917 is quoted far more often than Lenin after the Russian revolution. But Marx and Engels are even better.

The objective seems to be to derive the entire historical program of the revolutionary workers' movement from original sources--an interesting enterprise for an idealist but hardly useful from a historical materialist point of view. It would not be hard for them to come up with some discussion by Lenin before 1914, or by Marx and Engels, of the idea of a minimum and maximum program, and explain that our movement's traditional rejection of this idea is just one more mark of the "sectarian heritage" and "leftist bias" resulting from Trotsky's theories.

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### CORRECTION

The last issue of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism erroneously reported that Mitt Snipper was a sympathizer of the F.I.T. While Mitt attended some meetings of the Los Angeles F.I.T., he also attended public functions held by the Los Angeles branch of Socialist Action.



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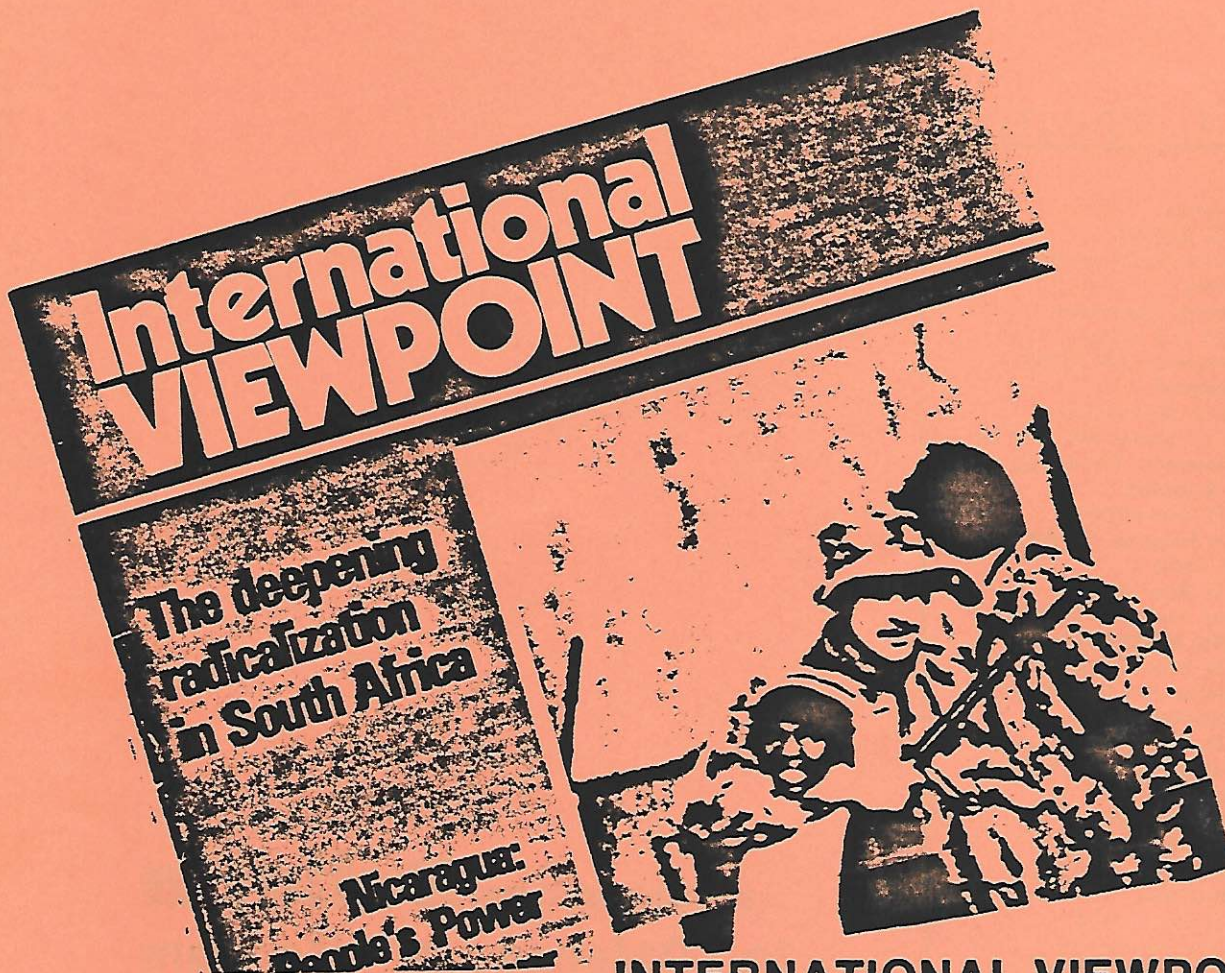
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