

Information, Education & Discussion

Bulletin

In Defense of Marxism

Published by expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party (U.S.A.)

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WHY WE ARE PUBLISHING THIS BULLETIN

The Bulletin In Defense of Marxism was initiated by supporters of the Fourth International in the United States who have been undemocratically expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because of our defense of a Trotskyist political outlook. Over the last few years the central leadership of the SWP has, step by step, been abandoning the traditional revolutionary Marxist program on which our party was founded and built for more than half a century. We, along with other comrades, have demanded a genuine discussion within the party of the new programmatic perspectives --as required by our democratic traditions and all norms of Leninist functioning. But because the leadership feared such a discussion--which would reveal their break from our historic continuity --they have responded first with attempts to silence and slander us, and finally with frame-ups and expulsions.

Since we have been excluded from pursuing the necessary defense of a revolutionary Marxist program through normal party channels we are now forced to try to do this from the outside. That is why we are publishing this bulletin. Our objective is to reverse the disastrous line currently being implemented by the SWP leadership, and to win the party back to a correct revolutionary Marxist approach to U.S. and world politics. This can still be accomplished by an active intervention of the party ranks.

We are also fighting for our reintegration into the SWP. We are appealing our expulsions through regular party procedures, as well as within our world movement. What should be on the agenda now is not splits and expulsions, but the necessary process of political discussion and clarification of opposing views. For Leninists, such political discussion must always precede organizational measures. The present SWP leadership cannot avoid that discussion in the long run, even if they succeed in expelling every conscious Trotskyist from the party. They, and the party ranks, will have to come to terms with the consequences of the new line as it is applied in practice, and as it comes more and more clearly into conflict with the reality of the world revolution today.

INTRODUCTION

A Call for the formation of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party and in the Fourth International was first issued in June 1982 by 18 members in the SWP who announced their intention to participate as a tendency in the pre-world congress discussion of the FI. The original Call is reproduced here on page 6. It was first published in the SWP's Internal Information Bulletin No. 1 in September 1982, after the 18 signers had been ordered to "cease and desist." (IIB No. 1, referred to in the SWP as "the \$8 bulletin" on account of its price, is an informative segment of the destructive record of the majority faction, illustrative of arrogant attitudes and bureaucratic methods. It is more revealing than its publishers know.)

Three of the 18 signers who issued the original Call, all of whom have since been expelled from the SWP (see our Bulletin No. 2), have now reissued the Call for the formation of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in a letter to the United Secretariat of the FI. We publish it here, and will report the further development and activities of the F.I.T. because we endorse the Call and will help organize the tendency.

The tendency is a continuation of the struggle for "the Trotskyist method," the contemporary expression of revolutionary Marxism. This method is applied by us to the best of our ability in the analysis of political developments on a world scale. In this way we derive our programmatic positions, defined in resolutions on the most fundamental issues facing working people in all countries. The most basic one of all is the building of the international working class movement for socialism. We recognize that our duty in the United States is to build the party in this country, a vital section of the world movement. Our attention is centered upon the vanguard of the working class. We are convinced that the vanguard in this country is the Socialist Workers Party, and on a world scale it is the Fourth International. This is why we address ourselves to the SWP and to the FI. We expect the F.I.T. to win adherents in these organizations. In the process it should attract radical-minded workers who will help correct the false course of the SWP leadership and in this way strengthen the FI and its sections.

The Call for the F.I.T. is the latest expression of the tendency that first arose in the SWP in December 1981 -- the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the National Committee -- whose 5-point platform was announced in a letter to the NC by Steve Bloom and Frank Lovell. We reproduce it here from IIB No.1 ("the \$8 bulletin") of September 1982 where it first became available to SWP members 9 months after being submitted to the NC.

Our endorsement of the SWP ticket in the 1984 general election, the third item, is an expression of our confidence in the ability of the working class to organize its own independent political party, and our confidence in the ability of the vanguard to chart a course in this direction. We do not believe that the present leadership of the SWP can explain in meaningful terms how the working class can build a labor party based on the union movement in this country. And this is the most urgent political task facing the U.S. labor movement in the electoral arena. This does not mean, however, that the SWP campaign this year cannot begin to overcome some of the lethargy and routinism that has characterized the party's electoral activity in recent years. An attempt at revitalization in this area of work by the leadership can arouse new interest and enthusiasm in party ranks and create conditions for serious

reexamination of the possibilities inherent in politically correct and carefully prepared electoral activity. The broad outlines of class conscious electioneering, the proper use of transitional slogans, and the art of talking to masses of people (the various strata of the working class and its allies) are all part of the rich tradition of the SWP. As the 1984 election campaign continues to bring surprises and opportunities, we will contribute to the SWP electoral strategy by drawing upon the party's experience. This is an obligation of all party members.

One of the big issues of the 1984 election campaign is U.S. military intervention against the revolutionary movements in Central America. All working class organizations ought to oppose the plans and actions of the American rulers to impose their dictatorial regimes in all countries of this hemisphere -- including our own country. The only road to victory for the working class is through the organization of independent parties against the political power of the employers. And the best historical model of how to advance along this road is the Leninist party of the Russian Bolsheviks.

The recent tragic events in Grenada demonstrate that the kind of regime that develops within parties of workers and poor people can be decisive for these parties and for the revolutions they aspire to lead. This applies to parties that call themselves "Marxist-Leninist," or are granted this distinguished designation by others. The party regime is a sure sign of what a party is. A party that does not understand the uses of factions, that proscribes factions, is not a Leninist party. Such a party, regardless of the individual talents in its leadership, courts disaster. This is why we are encouraging an open discussion on the central importance of party regime in the Leninist concept of party building and revolutionary activity. Steve Bloom has submitted an analysis of the way the SWP leadership handles this question, a matter of interest and discussion in the SWP, in relation to Grenada.

The two resolutions -- "A Platform to Overcome the Crisis in the Party" and "28 Theses on the American Socialist Revolution and the Building of the Revolutionary Party" -- were subscribed to and represent the position of the opposition bloc of two tendencies in the SWP national committee at the May 1983 plenum of the NC. This Opposition Bloc, consisting of the Fourth Internationalist Caucus of Bloom-Lovell and the Trotskyist Tendency of Weinstein-Henderson, was dissolved by its participants just before the August 1983 NC plenum at which the four oppositionists were expelled. These resolutions were suppressed in the SWP from May 1983 to the present time.

We regret that we are unable to publish in this issue of the Bulletin the chronicle of events in the SWP since the 1981 convention, as requested by readers and promised by us, but space and circumstances do not permit it this time. The chronicle will appear in an early issue, and of course we will report more on the anti-Trotskyist purge in the SWP.

New York, N.Y.
January 17, 1984

To: United Secretariat, Fourth International

From: Naomi Allen, George Breitman, George Saunders

Re: Reintroduction of call for Fourth Internationalist Tendency

Dear Comrades:

(1) The IEC's May 1982 meeting opened a written pre-world congress discussion in which members as well as leaders of the sections and fraternal parties could participate (IIDB, Volume XVIII, #3, June 1982). A month later, at the initiative of Steve Bloom and Frank Lovell of the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the National Committee, eighteen members of the Socialist Workers Party (USA) informed the party leadership that they were "announcing the formation of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in order to be able to participate collectively in the international discussion and to advance our views on disputed international questions in an organized and responsible way. In accord with the norms of democratic centralism we intend to consult in the preparation of documents for the International Internal Discussion Bulletin." The same statement briefly listed the political basis for the collaboration of the eighteen as an ideological tendency (already-published documents on Cuba, Leninism, Iran, and Poland) and asked the SWP leadership to circulate the statement of the eighteen to the branches for the information of the SWP membership. (A copy of the original F.I.T. statement is attached as an appendix to this document.)

(2) The Political Bureau of the SWP responded by denying the right of the eighteen to participate as a tendency in the pre-world congress discussion: "We instruct you to cease and desist from any further organized tendency activity of any kind. Any violation of this instruction is incompatible with membership in the SWP" (see July 13, 1982, letter by the Political Bureau in Internal Information Bulletin, September 1982, p. 154). The Political Bureau's prohibition was approved by the NC plenum of August 1982, a decision that was appealed by Comrades Bloom and Lovell to the United Secretariat.

(3) The October 1982 meeting of the United Secretariat strongly criticized the SWP's ban on the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, saying, "The right of the eighteen comrades to collectively draw up written documents, on issues included in their platform, in order to submit them to the international discussion is in line with our statutes, norms and traditions and should therefore be protected." It urged the SWP leadership to reverse its decision. But at the December 1982 NC plenum, the SWP majority rejected this request.

(4) As a result, the eighteen--who wished to remain in the SWP--had no alternative but to comply with the prohibition. The F.I.T. never had a single meeting, and did not produce any document other than its original brief statement. But the SWP central leadership--through its majority caucus--had no intention of ceasing and desisting from its efforts to prevent the eighteen, and other comrades who disagreed with the new political views being introduced by the leadership, from playing any significant role in the international discussion. Starting

in the fall of 1982, only a few months after the "cease and desist" orders, and almost immediately after the United Secretariat's action on the rights of the eighteen, the majority caucus began to eliminate these comrades from the party (along with many others having, or suspected of having, oppositional views) on trumped-up organizational pretexts. Between November 1982 and the end of August 1983, half of the eighteen were expelled or forced out:

*Anne Teasdale Zukowski--expelled for answering a question by a non-party YSA member;

*Dianne Feeley--expelled for organizing an International Women's Day event, allegedly "behind the back of the party";

*David Walsh--resigned after being denied a leave of absence for medical reasons;

*Paul LeBlanc--expelled for statements made at an SWP branch meeting;

*Les Evans--expelled for alleged "inactivity" and "financial boycott";

*Larry Cooperman--expelled for alleged "unauthorized discussions" with a non-party YSA member;

*Elias Ramirez--expelled for allegedly "endangering the security of the party" when he applied for a transfer to another branch and asked a question at his branch meeting about the Hector Marroquin defense;

*Steve Bloom and Frank Lovell--suspended from the NC and from the party for allegedly refusing to answer questions about the dissolution of the Opposition Bloc in the NC.

The SWP leadership claims that these nine comrades were driven out of the party because of their "actions," "violations of discipline," "breach of norms," etc. This is strictly to provide a rationalization for the purge policy which can be accepted by members of the SWP and of our world movement who either are too inexperienced to understand what is really happening, or else are willing to close their eyes to it. Any objective observer can see that these nine comrades were targeted because they had signed the statement of the eighteen--i.e., because of their political ideas.

(5) Now it can be reported that the other nine signers of the original F.I.T. statement have also been expelled in the Christmas-New Year's purge of December 1983-January 1984. None of these nine was allowed to attend the "trial" that expelled them. One of the nine, Evelyn Sell--a minority delegate to the California state convention--was expelled for "disloyally" not having taken the floor to repudiate remarks of other minority delegates. She was not allowed even the right to attend her trial or make a statement to it. Another Californian, Asher Harer, was expelled when he "disloyally" failed to repudiate the minority delegates' refusal to repudiate each other. Six other signers of the June 1982 statement, all in cities quite remote from California--Naomi Allen, Alan Benjamin, George Breitman, Joanna Misnik, Rita Shaw, Jean Tussey--were expelled for "disloyally" failing to repudiate actions of the minority members in California--about which they had little or no knowledge or information. George Saunders was expelled for "non-collaboration" with Political Committee representatives when he "disloyally" was unable to meet with them at the time they set to interrogate him about California.

In June 1982 we were all warned, on pain of expulsion, not to engage in "any organized tendency activity of any kind." A year and a half

later, after being prohibited from any collaboration with other comrades, we have been held responsible for actions not committed by us, and over which we had no control. We and the other victims of the SWP leadership's purge were not expelled because of "disloyal" actions or inactions. We were singled out for victimization because of our political views, and our desire for a genuine discussion of the new line adopted and applied by the SWP leadership since the 1981 convention--without membership discussion or consent.

(6) We, signers of the 1982 statement and victims of the recent purge on the East Coast, therefore announce that we are now constituting the long-prohibited Fourth Internationalist Tendency--as a national group of expelled SWP members who seek to influence and participate collectively in the pre-world congress discussion authorized by the IEC and in the inner-party discussion that will precede the next SWP convention, and who cannot now do so inside the SWP.

(7) Our platform includes all of the points in the one announced by the eighteen in June 1982. In addition to positions explained in the specific documents listed then, we also believe that only the SWP membership can have the last word concerning the direction the party should take. That word remains to be spoken. The SWP represents an unbroken heritage of more than five decades of revolutionary Marxism in this country. It will require a decisive test of the party ranks before anyone can correctly conclude that this heritage has been effectively destroyed by the anti-Leninist policies and revisionism of the current leadership. We remain, as we have always been, loyal to the SWP. We will continue to try to build the party, and convince the party membership of the need to return to the historical program of revolutionary Marxism, which is being abandoned by the present leadership. We demand the reinstatement of all members purged from the SWP for their political views since the 1981 convention, and we will appeal our expulsions both collectively and individually. We plan to announce other planks in our tendency platform after consultation with other comrades throughout the country.

(8) Not all of the eighteen who signed the June 1982 statement will agree with the perspective we have outlined here for the F.I.T. today. Only those whose names appear below take responsibility for this call. We urge all expelled comrades who want to vigorously pursue this program to join us now--whether or not they signed the 1982 statement. A full list of those who do will be forwarded later. (To join the F.I.T. and participate in its work, communicate with Naomi Allen, 2186 E. 22 St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229.)

(9) In October 1983, the United Secretariat urged the SWP leadership "to immediately and collectively reintegrate the expelled comrades." It also recognized that the comrades expelled from the SWP "will have no choice but to organize collectively," and pledged to "maintain relations with these comrades." We now call on the United Secretariat, in implementing this motion, to include the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and its members among the expelled members whom the SWP is urged to reinstate, and to provide us with all the opportunities and facilities for participation in the pre-world congress discussion that other tendencies, members, and supporters of the FI are entitled to.

Comradely,

Naomi Allen

Naomi Allen

George Breitman

George Breitman

George Saunders

George Saunders

Appendix

June 29, 1982

To the National Committee, Political Committee, and
Political Bureau, Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

Now that the IEC has opened a pre-world congress discussion in which members as well as leaders of the sections and fraternal parties can participate, we are announcing the formation of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in order to be able to participate collectively in the international discussion and to advance our views on disputed international questions in an organized and responsible way. In accord with the norms of democratic centralism, we intend to consult in the preparation of documents for the International Internal Discussion Bulletin. The political basis of our collaboration as an ideological tendency is agreement with the general line of the following documents: "The Cuban Revolution, the Castroist current, and the Fourth International," IEC resolution adopted May 1981 (*IP*, October 19, 1981); "The debate over the character and goals of the Russian revolution," by Ernest Mandel (*ISR*, April 1982); "The Iranian Revolution and the Dangers that Threaten It," resolution of the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the NC, presented to the February-March 1982 NC plenum (*International Internal Information Bulletin*, no. 1 in 1982, May 1982); and "Poland, the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party," a report by Steve Bloom to the February-March 1982 NC plenum (*International Internal Information Bulletin*, no. 2 in 1982, May 1982). We request that this statement be circulated to the branches for the information of the membership.

Naomi Allen, Brooklyn branch	Frank Lovell, Brooklyn branch
Alan Benjamin, Manhattan branch	Joanna Misnik, Cleveland branch
Steve Bloom, Brooklyn branch	Elias Ramirez, Newark branch
George Breitman, Manhattan branch	George Saunders, Manhattan branch
Larry Cooperman, Chicago branch	Evelyn Sell, Los Angeles branch
Les Evans, Iron Range branch	Rita Shaw, Seattle branch
Dianne Feeley, Pittsburgh branch	Jean Tussey, Cleveland branch
Asher Harer, San Francisco branch	Dave Walsh, Boston branch
Paul LeBlanc, Pittsburgh branch	Ann Teasdale Zukowski, Iron Range branch

Copy to United Secretariat

Hand delivered by Steve Bloom, June 29, 1982

PLATFORM OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST CAUCUS IN THE NATIONAL
COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

December 23, 1981

To the SWP National Committee
Re: The Fourth Internationalist Caucus, a political tendency
in the National Committee of the SWP

Dear Comrades:

Our November plenum revealed divergent political tendencies in the National Committee which reflect disagreements developing in the party as a whole. One tendency, represented by the majority, finds expression in the motions and reports that were adopted at the plenum. Another is expressed in the proposals submitted by the authors of this letter, which were voted down. A third tendency also exists, represented at our national convention last August by Comrades Weinstein and Henderson.

We are convinced that this plenum marked the further departure, by the majority tendency, from our traditional programmatic position on the working class struggle for power. What is therefore needed at this time is a reaffirmation of our party's basic political perspectives, applying in each instance the method of Marxist analysis as embodied in the Transitional Program, the American Theses, and other programmatic documents of the SWP. We must apply in our contemporary world the lessons that Lenin and Trotsky taught about the revolutionary struggle against world imperialism and the treachery of Social Democracy; and that Trotsky, after Lenin's death, taught about the Soviet bureaucracy. Only the basic program of the Fourth International can bring victory to the working class in the bastions of imperialist power.

In order to reverse an increasingly dangerous drift away from these basic positions by the majority tendency, we have decided to constitute ourselves as an organized caucus in the National Committee. What follows is the basic platform of our tendency, the Fourth Internationalist Caucus. This statement, of course, is not binding on anyone except its authors, whose signatures appear below, though we naturally hope that other comrades will find essential agreement with us, and we invite other members of the N.C. who become convinced of our perspectives to subscribe to our platform and collaborate with us to reorient the party on a correct course.

(1)

The declaration of martial law in Poland dictates that the party must qualitatively increase our propaganda efforts on this question, as we proposed to the November plenum. A sustained campaign in solidarity with the revolutionary struggles of the Polish workers is a necessary part of the present education and growth of the SWP.

Our wholehearted support to the political revolution against the counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy, and to the struggle for workers' democracy and national self-determination, must be at the center of this activity — along with our exposure of the role of imperialism as the implacable enemy of the Polish workers. Defense of the political revolution requires 100 percent opposition to the Stalinist caste in Poland which is trying to crush it. We must completely

discredit the claim of the Stalinists and their apologists that there is *anything* anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist in the attempt to smash Solidarity, a revolutionary movement of workers, farmers, and students.

One of our first tasks is to challenge in open debate, wherever possible, the false contention that the workers' movement in Poland is fighting for "Western-style democracy" against "Communist totalitarianism." This perversion is propagated by the Reagan administration and other agencies of U.S. imperialism, including the trade union bureaucracy. We must also counterpose our concept of the struggle for socialism to the counterrevolutionary goals and class collaborationist practices of the "state capitalists" and other "third campers," and we must expose the "two-camp global class conflict" theory, invented by Sam Marcy, which defends counterrevolution by Stalinist governments in power in the workers' states on the ground that these regimes are supposedly a part of the working class camp.

It is necessary for us to organize Militant Labor Forums under the auspices of the SWP to inform and educate our own members and sympathizers. But such educational meetings are not a substitute for active participation in union meetings, propaganda actions, public debates and teach-ins, broad public forums, etc., wherever the issue of bureaucratic suppression of workers' rights is raised, or can be raised.

We must attempt to work with forces broader than ourselves, as part of this campaign. There are many workers, students, and others beyond our own ranks who are receptive to our analysis of the Polish situation and would be open to proposals for solidarity activities around our perspectives. By projecting a united front type approach to this work we will make it easier for such individuals to participate, even if we are unable to involve any other organized political currents.

We should also join actions called by other forces, as long as they involve rebellious sectors of the working class, rank-and-file unionists, or the radical movement, in support of the workers' struggle in Poland. All of this will put us in the best position to participate in the continuing discussions in the workers' movement on the causes of and solution to the Polish crisis.

This is not an easy task. There are many real difficulties. But it is a task we must undertake. One thing is certain: If the genuine voice of the socialist revolution in the U.S. fails even to *attempt* to mobilize and organize the massive sentiment in this country for the Polish workers, that sentiment will certainly be channeled into a reactionary course, by the Social Democratic misleaders as well as by other more open agents of imperialist reaction and counterrevolution.

(2)

We call for a reversal of the incorrect analysis of events in Iran in the two articles by David Frankel: "Why Defenders of Democracy Go Wrong" (*IP*, Oct. 5, 1981) and "Imperialism and the Khomeini Government" (*IP*, Nov. 16, 1981). This subject did not come up for consideration at the plenum, but informal discussions with comrades, and subsequent developments, have convinced us that a serious error is being made here. In the articles cited above, Comrade Frankel

bases his entire analysis of Iran today on U.S. imperialism's opposition to the Khomeini regime. By so doing, he assigns the class struggle inside Iran to a completely subordinate place.

This is the opposite of a correct relationship between these two factors. For revolutionary Marxists, the problem of the Iranian socialist revolution is primary, and this alone can provide a real solution to the stranglehold of imperialism on that country. Our support to the military defense of the neo-colonial bourgeois regime under imperialist attack — a completely necessary task — is *subordinate* to our perspectives as proletarian revolutionists.

This error on Iran is extremely serious. It threatens to put us in the same camp as the Iranian counterrevolution. We urge comrades to read the analysis made by Trotsky of the problems of the Chinese revolution and the Spanish Civil War. These are essential theoretical guides for an accurate understanding of current events in Iran.

(3)

At the expanded PC meeting following our August 1981 convention, a brief discussion took place on the subject of Lenin's contribution to Marxism. This took the form of talks by Jack Barnes, Steve Clark, and Doug Jenness, followed by an opportunity for other comrades to participate. At the time, this was projected as the initiation of a broader discussion on this subject, though the only motion passed was for Clark and Jenness to compile reading lists based on their research.

However, there has been no further discussion. Instead, an article by Comrade Jenness appeared in the November *ISR*, which began to rewrite our traditional concept of the theoretical role played by Lenin and Trotsky in the Russian revolutionary movement between 1905 and 1917. As a result of this article we proposed at the plenum that a literary discussion be opened on this subject so that the entire party could participate in a democratic way. Our motion for this was voted down. Nevertheless, we continue to believe that such a discussion is an urgent necessity.

Comments by comrades at the plenum confirm that serious changes in our traditional outlook and understanding of Leninism are being introduced by the majority tendency without prior discussion and membership approval. These changes currently center upon the relationship between Lenin's conception of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. But the "new look at Leninism" goes far beyond the Lenin/Trotsky differences over the assessment and lessons of the 1905 revolution.

During our brief and inadequate discussion at the November plenum, several comrades of the majority asserted that Lenin's understanding of the dynamics of the Russian revolution was "more flexible," and Trotsky's "more rigid." This is quite different from our traditional view (based on all past studies) that Lenin's formula was aigebraic, and Trotsky's more precise.

It betrays ignorance at best, and dishonesty at worst, to quote Trotsky against himself on the relationship between his theory and Lenin's. Trotsky's writings on this question when he was fighting inside the Russian CP against Stalin's slander campaign reflect the polemical necessities of that struggle — the need to emphasize the identity of method that characterized both his theoretical work and that of Lenin.

Trotsky's final assessment of his differences with Lenin on the historic role of the working class and the social weight of the Russian peasantry in the revolution (resolved by the revolution itself) is contained in his essay, published posthumously, "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution" (*Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40*, pp. 55-73). This is required reading for anyone who wants to understand Lenin's formula.

A discussion of Leninism will take place in the party, stimulated by Doug Jenness's article, by the projected class series, and by new historical conceptions such as those that were revealed at the plenum. We proposed that this discussion take place in an organized way. This remains the only responsible way to proceed. The procedure being followed now, of introducing the new approach *without* a thorough and democratic discussion in the *whole* party, is unacceptable. Jack Barnes's proposal in his summary on this point — that comrades should feel free to discuss Leninism with anyone they want to — is simply a proposal for a disorganized, undemocratic discussion, which can only be disruptive to the party.

(4)

Our differences with the majority tendency over Cuba and Castroism, which arose during and before our 1981 convention, continue to be central to this discussion. Comrades of the majority continue to idealize the political consciousness of the Castro leadership, and the realities of Cuban life — particularly on the question of workers' democracy. This idealization has created growing pressures for changes in some of our traditional views in order to bring them more into line with Castroist thinking. The mistaken positions of the majority which we have discussed so far in this letter are a direct result of these pressures.

Our view is that Castroism constitutes a revolutionary current, but one which lacks a complete theoretical base and therefore suffers from important programmatic deficiencies. Rather than trying to minimize or cover up our real differences with the Castroists, or change our program to adapt to theirs, we believe we must attempt to engage them in an open and comradely discussion on the points of disagreement between us. At the same time we must fight shoulder-to-shoulder with them on the substantial questions where we can find common ground. We believe that this is the approach to the Castro regime and Castroism expressed in the general line of the IEC resolution entitled "The Cuban Revolution, the Castroist Current, and the Fourth International" (*IP*, Oct. 19, 1981), which we support.

It is a serious mistake to focus our attention narrowly on the revolutionary upsurge in the Caribbean and in Central America while minimizing the importance of major developments in other parts of the world. It is a serious mistake for the revolutionary party in the United States to adopt the Cuban CP as its model.

We fully solidarize with the revolutionary movements in El Salvador, Guatemala, and the rest of Latin America, as do all sections of the Fourth International. We completely agree that it is the elementary duty of revolutionists in the U.S. to defend the Cuban workers' state and the workers' and farmers' governments in Nicaragua and Grenada from imperialist attack in every way possible, as the SWP has always done; and to explain the big advance these regimes represent over Stalinism and class collaborationism. We agree that we must try to unite with these forces in any and

every way possible to advance the world revolution. The most essential prerequisite for this is for us to continue building our party in this country, in accordance with the present stage of working class radicalization and the tempo of the class struggle here.

(5)

We believe it is necessary now to review what and where we are, and to project the kind of party we are striving to become. It is true, as the majority tendency claims, that we are still a propaganda group. But we ought to revive Cannon's conception of "a propaganda group that acts like a political party." This is a necessary antidote against the current drift toward sterile and abstentionist propagandism.

At the November plenum this question of the present stage of working class radicalization and our "propaganda approach" to most domestic issues came up mainly around the problems of our work in NOW and the fight for the ERA. But it also arises in connection with our work in the union movement and in other arenas.

The *Militant's* coverage of strikes reflects self-imposed isolation from real struggles and a mood of pessimism. The handling of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers (PATCO) strike is an example. After about the first month of the strike, when the labor movement failed to close down the airlines and force a showdown with the Reagan administration, the *Militant* began to write about the strike as having been defeated. This was wrong. We should not be the first to run up the white flag in such a crucial battle.

The Philadelphia teachers' strike is a still more flagrant example of how a preconceived pessimistic schema caused a distorted view of reality. In this case, 23,500 teachers walked out in defense of 3,500 who were fired. As a result of the strike, these jobs were won back. Instead of seeing this as a victory, though only a partial one since wage demands were not won, the *Militant* ran an article by a staff reporter which began by stating that the "labor movement lost another round."

The majority position on the fight for the ERA is another example of the pessimism and abstentionism that pervades all our work in the mass movements in this country. Our proposal at the plenum to launch a campaign in support of ERA — to advocate a program of action which could link *in practice* the fight for the ERA to other issues like abortion rights and the struggle against the overall ruling class offensive — was rejected. Instead, the majority voted to uphold the approach called "discussing strategy" as exemplified by our intervention at the NOW convention.

Every radical sectarian group is capable of "discussing strategy" by explaining how present problems will be solved when the working class is mobilized to take political power. That is no answer to what must be done now. We must, of course, explain the overall goals of the socialist movement. But this cannot be the sole extent, or even the main focus, of our activity in the mass movement.

The discussion at the November plenum tended to center around the question of whether we are "in favor of" or "opposed to" action. But the real question is whether we are in favor of *advocating* action, *initiating* proposals for action. We believe that we should do this, as part of our propaganda intervention, and where possible in an agitational way, in

all of our mass work. We believe that through explaining concrete proposals for action — specific activities, slogans and outreach appropriate to the particular situation — we can best advance our strategic perspectives. This is the best way to expose what is wrong with the strategy of the class collaborationists, and it is the best way — in fact it is the only way — to win over the future leadership of the working class to a fighting, revolutionary program.

Our fundamental disagreement with the majority tendency is over what the revolutionary party should do in this period. We believe that it is correct for us to *act* like the leadership we want to *become*, even though we have no illusions, nor do we foster any, in what we can accomplish at this time. We must explain our approach to *every* problem faced by working people, both big and small. This means, of course, discussing our overall strategy. But it also means translating our strategy into specific proposals, whenever possible, around specific questions and issues which are foremost in the consciousness of radicalizing workers, feminists, Blacks, students, etc.

Our task is to explain to those who are ready to do battle with the ruling class how to begin that fight; how to organize themselves; how to mobilize support; who their real enemy is; who their allies are; and how to focus their attack on target. This means having proposals to deal with specific, practical, tactical problems, as well as an overall strategic perspective. This is our understanding of the kind of propaganda we should be spreading, instead of an abstract litany about the employing class offensive, the retreat of the unions, and the need for a labor party.

Breathing real life into our labor party slogan is, in fact, one of the central challenges we face. Union workers can begin from where we are in thinking about independent political action. Relief from the present unemployment crisis will come from a shorter workweek in all industry, the elimination of overtime work, and a massive public works program to create socially productive jobs. We believe that local unions in every Congressional district should run working men and women for Congress to fight for these basic economic and political demands. That is the way a labor party will be created.

Our task at the moment is to build our party by working with and helping all those who are ready to fight against the ruling class attacks. We must make the SWP a factor in the political life of every city and area where we have a branch and in every union and other mass organization our members belong to. Building the revolutionary party in the United States is our primary responsibility.

* * *

Although this letter is addressed to the N.C., we believe that it concerns the entire membership of the party. We therefore request that in addition to being sent to the National Committee members it be printed in a *Party Organizer* or other bulletin, or that copies be sent to all branches for the information of the members.

Comradely,

Steve Bloom
Frank Lovell

cc: United Secretariat

WE ENDORSE THE 1984 SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

MEL MASON FOR PRESIDENT.....ANDREA GONZÁLES FOR VICE-PRESIDENT

The 1984 election period is an opportunity for socialists to explain the causes of the interrelated issues which are everyday worries and topics of discussion: U.S. government war moves in Central America and against Cuba, U.S. troops in Grenada and Lebanon; the worldwide crisis of capitalism, continuing U. S. unemployment and inflation, the anti-union offensive of the employers aided by their servants in government, no-end-in-sight cutbacks in services and human needs; ever-worsening problems for Blacks, Latinos, women and youth.

Election campaigns provide opportunities to propose what is needed to begin resolving these concerns: independent political action by working people and their allies, the mobilization of fightback formations of the victims of capitalist crises at home and abroad, and working class solidarity in the United States and on an international scale.

Radicalized individuals can be won to a perspective of building a revolutionary party which will be a vital element in the socialist transformation of our society.

An aggressive socialist campaign can attract the support of activists in current struggles: oppressed minorities who are continuing to press for social, economic and political gains; women who are more conscious than ever of the causes and the results of sexism; unionists resisting the takebacks and labor-busting tactics of employers; youth faced with joblessness, indecent education and the draft; the unemployed who've begun to organize a movement to fight for their needs; debt-burdened and dispossessed family farmers.

Fueled by resentment against the Reagan administration, the voter registration drives among poor people, especially among Blacks, are getting a greater response than four years ago during the last presidential election period.

The Democratic party is taking advantage of the hatred and fear generated by Reagan's policies -- just as the Republicans took advantage of Carter's unpopularity in 1980. Once more the old argument is made that only a Democratic candidate can win and can push Reagan out of office. Millions will again play ping-pong politics: ins--out, outs--in.

More and more people, however, are questioning the values of this predatory capitalist system. They are losing confidence in the ability of the capitalists to organize and lead our society. They are mistrustful of the political servants of the ruling class. They remember that independent action got Blacks rights during the 1950s and 1960s, forced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, won abortion rights and greater job opportunities for women in the 1970s. The phrase "the Vietnam syndrome" sums up a combination of these attitudes and lessons.

To keep such people in the two-party system, reformist leaders are presenting certain figures as "peoples' candidates" who are against machine politics and "independent" of the old party apparatus. This was successfully used in Harold Washington's race for mayor of Chicago.

Jesse Jackson's campaign attracts those looking for a candidate untainted by the smoke-filled-back-rooms of the Democratic party machine, those thinking that a "rainbow coalition" can force concessions from established powers, those hoping the Democratic party may be changed to be a party of and for the poor and super-exploited.

Jackson may stand outside the old party machine but he's not independent of the ruling class political machine that runs on two tracks: Democratic and Republican. There is an element to his campaign, however, that may be risky to old business-as-usual capitalist politics. His rhetoric and actions reflect a genuine sentiment for independent political power. In trying to exploit that sentiment as a bargaining chip within the Democratic party, his campaign may help open a door to a deeper and broader development going beyond the limits he has set and limits desired by his supporters in the traditional Black leadership.

A more traditional game is being played by labor, feminist and community leaders who have endorsed Democratic nominee Mondale. These leaders have a big problem: they must deliver some real benefits to the groups they represent but, at the same time, their political strategy is to deliver votes to candidates with long records of betraying campaign promises. This self-defeating strategy will not satisfy those members who are becoming more and more politically conscious.

Socialist candidates and campaigners must hammer away at the need for real independent political organization - - for a Black party, for a Latino party, for a labor party.

The initial proposals of the Socialist Workers party 1984 national election campaign address many problems and pose some realistic answers capped by a call for independent political action.

In developing this platform further and in arguing against the claims of capitalist candidates, the SWP campaign will need to use a double-barreled approach:

use every fact available to demonstrate over and over that the Democrats have consistently betrayed every campaign promise they've made in order to serve the interests of the employers against the workers;

use every fact available to show concretely how a labor party can be launched and built by those who hold immense potential political power and have the ability to do the job themselves.

A labor party won't spring up overnight like Jack's magic beanstalk. The ground can be prepared by those already set into motion through their involvement in social, economic and political struggles. The time, energy and organizational know-how funneled into supporting Democrats can be redirected into starting up independent political action formations to serve their own interests. The millions of dollars pouring into Democratic party campaigns are fully sufficient to begin to finance the initial needs of new party efforts. NOW, for example, anticipates raising \$3 million through its Political Action Committee to back Democratic candidates. The National Education Association Political Action Committee projects a goal of \$4 million for the 1984 elections.

Labor unions, the organizations of oppressed minorities, feminist groups and farm associations can reach out to the unemployed movement, anti-intervention coalitions, anti-war and anti-nuclear formations, young people and senior citizen activists. These forces, already on the move, are capable of initiating the process of independent political organization.

The SWP ticket is headed up by Mel Mason who can point to his own experiences as a community militant and a city council member to prove that independent candidates can win office and can use their positions to fight for the needs of working and oppressed people.

Even relatively small numbers of socialist campaigners can have an impact on the thinking and activities of many, many people by helping to build fightback actions and being a part of the everyday struggles on the job, in the communities of oppressed minorities, within feminist action groups, among young people and through the unemployed movement and associations of family farmers.

The process through which political class consciousness develops is outlined in the Transitional Program, a basic SWP statement and approach since it was founded in 1938. This method of analyzing and responding to class struggle developments was used by the SWP to produce "A Transitional Program for Black Liberation" and other programs relating to Chicanos, women and youth in 1969 and the early 1970s. SWP campaigners in 1984 have these rich resources to draw upon in preparing solutions for unemployment, cutbacks, union-busting attacks, blows against civil rights and civil liberties, sexism, "conventional" wars and nuclear annihilation.

* * * * *

ON THE QUESTION OF REGIME IN THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The catastrophe which befell revolutionary Grenada requires a serious analysis by all currents claiming to be Marxist. It is not enough, faced with such developments, to bemoan Bishop's and Grenada's fate, or denounce Coard, or curse the imperialists. Answers must be found for the questions of why and how such a situation could develop within the New Jewel Movement (Grenada's revolutionary party)--a situation which exploded in a coup and brutal executions, with the consequent disarray of the Grenadian masses and their supporters in the U.S. and elsewhere, which in turn opened the door for the U.S. invasion and the complete extirpation of the revolution.

The question of the regime within the revolutionary party, and that party's relation to the mass of the population, arises not only from the Grenadian debacle. It has been posed by a wide range of past developments in many varied situations. In recent years, for example, the Khmer Rouge--the Cambodian party that proclaimed itself Marxist-Leninist--ferociously liquidated those within its ranks who opposed, or were suspected of opposing, the disastrous course embarked on by the leadership, which ended up in mass executions of the Cambodian workers and peasants.

It is posed again today by the Salvadoran FPL's announcement, carried in full in the Cuban and Sandinista press, that investigation revealed the assassination of Melida Anaya Montes (Commander Ana Maria) of the FPL-Farabundo Marti to have been ordered by that party's founder and top leader, Salvador Cayetano Carpio (Commander Marcial). One of his lieutenants, it is reported, putting a squad of FPL members under military discipline, carried out the murder.

In each of these and many other instances it is obvious that the procedures for resolving differences in views and programs, for allowing loyal minority viewpoints, and for restraining destructive personal ambitions were sorely defective or completely absent.

It is not enough for a party to proclaim itself Marxist-Leninist to make it actually so. In addition to theory and political principles developed in the Bolshevik party before the degeneration of the Russian revolution, there is the crucial matter of the party's inner regime and the methods followed in making decisions and conducting activity. The true Leninist party is a free association of revolutionists who agree to act together in a disciplined manner, allowing for free and adequate discussion by the members in arriving at a decision, but with acceptance by the minority of the majority decision after it has been democratically made. Submission of the minority, of course, did not for the Bolsheviks mean renouncing opinion, but rather carrying out the majority decision pending the next occasion on which the matter would be open for discussion.

Individuals sharing the same or similar views could organize themselves into tendencies and, if they desired, into factions within the party for the advancement of their views. It is this democratic centralism that made the Bolshevik party in the days of Lenin and Trotsky able to resolve the problem of contending tendencies and

factions. For parties aspiring to be Marxist-Leninist today it is absolutely essential that such internal democratic procedures become standard.

Lessons in centralism are hardly necessary for revolutionary fighters today. Everything in bourgeois politics and the bureaucratically run trade-union movement gives lessons in the strongest and harshest forms of centralism. This is reinforced by more than half a century of miseducation as a result of Stalinism's influence on a large segment of the international working class movement. And in the third world, where actual armed struggle is either in progress or threatened by the imperialists, centralism is a military necessity. Yet without democratic control of the party leadership by the ranks the danger of degeneration of the party is omnipresent, and with this comes the danger of a serious dislocation of the party's relation to the masses.

The publications of the Socialist Workers Party currently assert that the fault all lies with the existence of "secret factions." For those who are familiar with the present purge of all dissenters from the ranks of the SWP and the rationalizations presented by the party leadership for this, the self-serving nature of this formula will be apparent. The crisis in the party that the leadership itself has created is blamed, like the Salvadoran and Grenadian events, on a "secret faction"--as if in Grenada it was not the misuse of the party apparatus, in which Coard had gained control of the Central Committee, that set off the train of tragic events; and as if, in the Salvadoran FPL, it was not, according to the charges, the misuse of the party's apparatus by its founder and chief leader, Cayetano Carpio, that brought about Ana Maria's assassination by duped rank-and-filers. No, the answer lies not in "secret factions" but in the type of regime within the party, the restraints that the ranks can exercise over the leaders--in a word the difference between monolithism and true democratic centralism.

Up until now the press of the left has carried little more than a description of events in Grenada. Now is the time for analysis--for a probing of the social and political causes underlying the events. In such an analysis this question of democratic control by the rank and file and by the masses must be addressed--how and why the membership of the New Jewel Movement and the Grenadian workers and farmers could be displaced by Coard and his supporters. This should be done not in a narrow partisan way but in an objective Marxist manner.

As an initial contribution to such a discussion we publish the following article by Steve Bloom, which explains specifically why the analysis of the Grenadian events presented so far by the leadership of the SWP is incomplete and inadequate; and tries to begin answering some basic questions. We encourage others to offer comments and criticism.

Why Steve Clark Can't Really Explain What Happened in Grenada

By Steve Bloom

Since the coup in Grenada and the U.S. invasion, quite a few pages in the Militant and Intercontinental Press have been devoted to explaining these events, presenting the views of the present leadership of the Socialist Workers Party or of others whose perspective they share. Articles on the subject include an initial assessment by Steve Clark in the November 7 IP, a report from the November SWP National Committee plenum in the December 9 Militant, a speech by Castro printed in the December 12 IP, and an interview with New Jewel Movement leader Don Rojas in the December 12 IP. The most recent effort appears in the December 1983 International Socialist Review, also by Steve Clark, entitled, "Grenada's Workers and Farmers Government, its achievements and its overthrow." This article continues the general approach of those that preceded it. Clark quotes extensively from both Castro and Rojas to back up his points.

Given the key role that the Grenadian revolution has played in the new strategic world outlook developed by the SWP leadership over the last few years, we should expect a serious and in-depth analysis from Clark of the counterrevolutionary events in that country. It is most remarkable that despite the length of the latest article (nine tabloid-sized pages) what probing Clark does into underlying causes goes barely further than a psychological level. We are informed: "On October 12, the Coard group placed Maurice Bishop under house arrest and organized to use whatever deadly force was necessary to establish its total domination." "A semi-secret factional grouping or clique around Bernard Coard had managed, especially since mid-1982, to strengthen its influence and control. . . ." "Coard's secret faction had moved from ambition and cliquism, to open treachery and betrayal of the revolution."

Clark quotes a similar comment from Castro: "Hyenas emerged from the revolutionary ranks." And Castro asks: "Were they simply a group of ambitious, opportunistic individuals, or were they enemy agents who wanted to destroy the Grenadian revolution?" Similarly, Clark quotes Rojas, explaining that Coard's faction "always maintained a kind of clique, an OREL clique, within the New Jewell Movement. . . ." (OREL was one of the groups that fused to form the New Jewel Movement in 1973; Coard was one of its leaders at the time)

Clark, who has presumably studied the historical materialist method of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky must know that these statements--though in general quite consistent with the facts as known--cannot be a sufficient analysis for revolutionary Marxists. Secret factions, cliques, ambitious individuals, and even enemy agents will inevitably exist within every revolutionary process (particularly after the conquering of governmental power). What is needed is an explanation of why, in this specific case these elements were able to gain sufficient strength and overwhelm the revolutionary forces. What objective and subjective factors combined to allow this to happen?

Accepting Clark's analysis as it now stands would be roughly the same as if, in discussing the degeneration of the Russian revolution, we could be satisfied simply with a statement like: "Stalin's clique, moved by personal ambition and a drive for power, proceeded from slander and falsification to the physical liquidation of the opposition." Of course, this is true. But it hardly stands as an explanation for what happened. The social roots and political revisionism of the Stalin clique must be thoroughly analyzed, along with the concrete factors that led them to power in opposition to the interests of the working class.

The counterrevolution in Grenada, while certainly not equalling the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian revolution in terms of its world historic significance, still represents an extremely profound event if viewed on the scale of the Grenadian revolution itself. In some ways it is even more profound, because it resulted not just in the degeneration of the revolutionary regime, but in its overthrow. A real assessment of the social and political roots of this process is essential, and must be undertaken.

Clark himself seems dimly aware of the problems that his article faces from a methodological point of view, and includes the following: "A materialist explanation for what happened in Grenada cannot rise or fall simply on an assessment of the actions of a single individual--even an individual whose role was unquestionably decisive. These events reflected the social consequences of objective difficulties from imperialist pressure, poverty, and small size already described. Coard exploited these real difficulties to gain a hearing from layers of politically inexperienced cadres in the NJM for his explanation that 'the problem is Maurice.'"

Yet after this nod of the head in the direction of the need for "a materialist explanation for what happened in Grenada," Clark leaves the reader--now waiting expectantly--with nothing more than a few generalities in the next paragraph about different reactions to the "objective difficulties . . . already described" by workers, petty-bourgeois, and others. He concludes by explaining: "Coard and his followers had become divorced from the Grenadian people and reflected attitudes of bureaucratism, careerism, and individual ambition characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie, not the working class."

In place of Coard's explanation, "the problem is Maurice," Clark would assert "the problem is Coard and others who reflected petty-bourgeois attitudes." Again we are compelled to ask: How did this petty bourgeois layer succeed in side-tracking the proletarian revolution?

In fact, Clark's statement that the Coard group reflected class differences within the NJM in combination with other assertions he makes elsewhere in the article creates a serious contradiction in his overall analysis. Earlier we were informed, "There is no indication that any explicit fundamental economic or social policy question was at the root of the betrayal by Coard and other NJM renegades." And later on, "The petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic modes of functioning by the Coard faction in the government, army, and party--not any thought-out alternative political course for Grenada--were at the root of this group's trajectory."

This is a very strange materialism which Comrade Clark is peddling, and a very strange petty-bourgeois current that overwhelmed a revolution without any political or programmatic challenge whatsoever. "Petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic modes of functioning" cannot be at the root of anything. They are organizational manifestations of deeper political and programmatic differences. Real differences between petty-bourgeois and proletarian currents cannot be purely organizational, and the differences between petty-bourgeois and proletarian modes of organization are always, and only, a reflection of the difference between proletarian and petty-bourgeois politics.

If, indeed, Clark is correct, that class differences within the NJM were reflected in the development of the Coard group, then we must all the more resolutely strive to uncover the political differences that must be at the root of these events, and explain how they served a different class interest. At least, we must do this if we are really interested in a materialist analysis--particularly when the differences pose the question of continuing revolution vs. counterrevolution. In a small country like Grenada, accidental factors, personality clashes, "petty-bourgeois modes of functioning," etc. can play a much larger role in determining the shape of events; but they still cannot be decisive in the final analysis.

Why is it that Clark and the SWP leadership are faced with such a serious flaw in their understanding? Why are they unable to undertake a genuine materialist explanation of the counterrevolution in Grenada? Even if there is not sufficient information to really explain the growth and development of the Coard faction from a sociological point of view, there should at least be consideration of how that faction was able to overthrow and murder Bishop and the other NJM leaders (something we do have information about). The reason this is absent from the SWP leadership's analysis is that to discuss these things they would have to come to terms with their schematic and idealized approach to the Grenadian revolution over the last four years.

A Marxist analysis of this counterrevolution must base itself on the contradictions that existed within the revolutionary process itself. Some of these contradictions were inevitable given the international context of a revolution in a small, economically backward country (the objective difficulties explained by Clark). But some of these contradictions did not stem from such objective problems. They were rather the result of subjective weaknesses in the ideology of the New Jewel Movement.

The SWP leadership has consistently refused to even consider or discuss such subjective weaknesses--declaring any attempt to do so an attack on the Grenadian revolution or on Maurice Bishop personally. There can be little doubt that the same charge will be levelled against this article. But a genuine assessment of what happened in Grenada (one that goes beyond surface phenomena) cannot be made without taking these subjective contradictions into account--just as Marx and Engels could not discuss the defeat of the Paris Commune without explaining the errors made by the Communards in their struggle against Versailles. This was hardly an "attack on the Commune" (or even on its leaders).

Any internal counterrevolution--i.e. one that is not a result of external invasion by an overwhelmingly superior military force--must ultimately be explained by a lack of sufficient mobilization on the part of the masses. No investigation of such an event can be adequate without an inquiry into the reasons for such a demobilization of the proletariat and its allies.

In analyzing the degeneration of the Russian revolution, for example, Trotsky explained that the proletariat became tired as a result of years of civil war and struggle against imperialist invasion. The most militant fighters suffered the highest casualties in these struggles. By the time the military threat to the revolution was defeated, the masses lacked sufficient strength to combat the new, internal danger from Stalin and the bureaucratic clique he represented.

Was the defeat in Grenada a result of a similar tiring-out of the masses? That would have to be the case if we attribute events, as Clark does, simply to "objective difficulties." But Clark does not follow this logic through, and for obvious reasons--since it would be very difficult to substantiate any notion that the Grenadian masses had been worn down by their objective problems. All factors indicate that, on the contrary, they maintained their willingness and ability to mobilize in defense of their revolution as they had in the past. But if that is the case, then something else must have created the necessary preconditions for Coard's attempt to seize power.

The fact is that the Grenadian people were unable to adequately defend their revolution primarily because the Coard-Austin coup caught them (as it did the rest of the world) completely by surprise and politically unprepared. The cause of this lies not with the backwardness of the masses, or in "objective difficulties." It is a result of a failure on the part of the Bishop wing of the NJM leadership to understand the necessity of making the masses themselves a part of the debate with the Coard faction about the direction of the revolution. The masses were not involved in the struggle until they had already been completely disarmed, and a severe blow against the revolution had been struck.

Both Clark and Rojas date the beginning of the problems that ultimately culminated in the coup from at least the middle of 1982, more than a year before the actual counterrevolution. By September 1983, the danger had become acute enough that a large majority of the NJM Central Committee voted for a perspective condemning Bishop's leadership. Yet Bishop, and those who supported him within the CC didn't breathe a word about this dispute outside of the NJM, and perhaps (it isn't completely clear) not even the party ranks were informed.

We know that although this dispute was given an organizational form by Coard and his supporters, it had a basis in important political differences--even if they were not "explicit" or "thought out" (to use Clark's terms). Clark quotes Rojas explaining: "Bernard and his people . . . said they were dissatisfied with the pace at which the process was evolving. . . . Somehow the notion that this process was not going fast enough entered into the ideological discussion in the party and led to a kind of cleavage."

It is also clear that in any open discussion of the problems facing the revolution among the masses, Bishop and his perspectives would have won a resounding victory. Had the advocates of this line within the NJM gone to the people with this discussion (and not just the Grenadian people, but the whole international revolutionary movement), mobilized them against the perspectives of the Coard group, and defeated it politically, then the demoralizing defeat, which paved the way for the U.S. invasion could in all likelihood have been avoided.

But we must also carry our assessment one step further, because the failure of Bishop to undertake this kind of struggle was not simply an error of judgement--a failure to recognize the seriousness of the challenge presented by Coard--although such an error was no doubt involved. There was also a methodological error, one inherent in the Castroist ideology of the NJM.

Castroism is a profoundly revolutionary current, which has always put the interests of the masses first and foremost in the revolutionary process. In this it stands in stark contrast to Stalinism--which subordinates those interests to the needs of a privileged bureaucracy in the workers' states. But Castroism does suffer from a serious weakness in that it sees the consciousness of the vanguard party (the Cuban CP, the NJM, the FSLN) as the primary guarantee for the continued health of the revolution, rather than relying on a process of discussion and decision-making by the masses themselves.

Such an approach can work reasonably well as long as the party, and its central leadership, remain healthy and on course. But severe problems are revealed when events occur such as those in Grenada. If the leading party is not directly and immediately accountable to the people for its actions, and the party becomes out of tune with the masses, and out of tune with objective reality, a severe crisis is inevitable. To avoid this there must be a mechanism by which the masses themselves can correct, or even replace the ruling party if that is required.

This takes us, finally, to another problem illustrated by the Grenadian events: the need for the free expression and open competition of different political perspectives and tendencies within the revolutionary movement. The model of a monolithic party organization--which prohibits or severely limits the formation of internal groupings --ruling over a one-party state does not derive from Marxism or Leninism. It is a notion that has arisen within the workers' movement because of the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR. Unfortunately, because of the historical circumstances in which the Castroist current has evolved, it has adopted this model, which is in complete contradiction to the broader revolutionary and humanitarian perspectives which Castroism has consistently fought for.

Clark and the SWP leadership strongly object to Coard's "secret factionalism." But the fact is that in a Castroist party every faction must be secret, because no other kind is permitted. This is a severe weakness. The correct and necessary response to the development of a faction such as Coard's is not primarily to complain about the fact that it was secret, but to bring it out into the open, make it public, respond to it, and defeat it politically.

The development of different perspectives and programs about how to move forward is inevitable within the working class movement, both before and after the taking of power. Because of this, it is also inevitable that political groupings--tendencies, factions, and parties --will arise which express those differences. This is a necessary and useful part of the revolutionary process. Such political groupings will sometimes reflect differing class perspectives, but may also result from real and honest disagreements about how to advance the interests of the workers and their allies.

Even when alien class forces or interests are involved, the best way to combat this is by encouraging a free and open debate. All that can be accomplished by prohibitions and administrative remedies is to guarantee that any problem or disagreement will be expressed secretly, or in other ways that are destructive to the real interests of the revolution.

The involvement of the masses directly in a process of free and open debate among competing tendencies or parties--within the context of the socialist revolution--is the only way to really assure their continued consciousness, participation, and mobilization. On this continued mobilization and vigilance of the workers and their allies hinges the success of the revolution; and its defense against counter-revolution, whether internal or external.

January 21, 1984

The Revolution in Central America and the Caribbean and Its Place in the International Class Struggle

by Frank Lovell and Steve Bloom

[The following article represents the views of the Fourth Internationalist Caucus, a political tendency in the SWP National Committee comprised of Steve Bloom and Frank Lovell.]

There is a new consciousness among working people the world over as a result of the deepest economic crisis since the 1930s. This has forced austerity programs in the imperialist centers (through threats of layoffs and plant closings, as well as through direct government cutbacks), in the colonial and semi-colonial countries (imposed by the International Monetary Fund as a pre-condition for further credit), and in the bureaucratized workers states (through the state power controlled by the bureaucracy itself).

The struggles, both big and small, of working people against these attacks on their living standards, and against the governments which enforce these attacks, combined with the other fights — for self-determination of oppressed nations, for civil liberties and human rights, and against oppression of all kinds — forms a single, common class struggle on a world scale. The victory of the Canadian Chrysler workers, the toppling of Somoza in Nicaragua, of the Shah of Iran, the continued resistance of the Polish workers, all contribute to an unstable international situation which forces the imperialist bourgeoisie and its allies — the neo-colonial ruling classes and the Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucracies — to fight a war on many fronts, thus making a decisive counterrevolutionary victory on any one of them much more difficult. Today, more than ever before, it is the interrelationship and interconnections between the three sectors of the world revolution that will be decisive for every struggle.

An understanding of the broad sweep of the international capitalist crisis and its myriad forms and manifestations, the varied opportunities it poses for revolutionary Marxists, its impact on all three sectors of the world revolution, and the links between those sectors, can help us see why it is one-sided to say simply, as the central leadership of the SWP does, that Nicaragua and the Central American revolution are the epicenter of all politics in the world today; why it is wrong to conclude that other struggles are subordinate. Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, etc. are central, but just as important they are also component parts of a larger revolutionary process. Each element in this process has its own specific dynamics. But each one is related to, and to a large degree dependent on the others.

Events in Central America take place in an international context which creates major difficulties for the counterrevolutionary efforts of the imperialist powers, unlike the days when the U.S. could simply invade a country (Guatemala, 1954, or the Dominican Republic, 1965) or during the beginning phase of the Vietnam conflict. The revolutionary struggles in Central America and the Caribbean contribute to, and gain from, the many other developments in the international class struggle.

By correctly grasping this overall character of the world revolutionary process — the context of the dramatic and important events going on in Central America and in Grenada — we can properly appreciate the specific developments taking place in that part of the world. In Nicaragua and Grenada proletarian revolutionary forces have taken governmental power and are wielding it in the interests of the workers and peasants, against the interests of imperialism and the native ruling classes. The workers' and peasants' governments in these countries have taken measures to consolidate the power of the toilers: organizing, mobiliz-

ing, and arming the masses; and undertaking extensive campaigns to raise their level of cultural and political understanding. Although a decisive showdown has not yet occurred with the still dominant economic power of the bourgeoisie, the general trend is in the direction of the creation of a workers' state resting on nationalized property.

In El Salvador we see similar revolutionary forces in the FMLN-FDR who have a perspective of conquering governmental power as the Sandinistas did in Nicaragua; and there appears to be every likelihood of their success. The revolutionary-proletarian forces in the FMLN-FDR are moving forward with this perspective, and have rejected subordination of their struggle to the more "moderate" interests of their bourgeois and petty-bourgeois coalition partners. It is in this respect that the FMLN-FDR differs qualitatively from popular front coalitions between workers' and bourgeois parties.

Similar struggles, with similar potential, though at a much more preliminary stage of development, are occurring in other countries in the region, such as Guatemala.

The influence and importance of Cuba in all of these revolutions is enormous. The forces leading all of these developments are a part of what has come to be called the Castroist current, and the course of the Central American and Caribbean revolution decisively demonstrates what we have always pointed to as the basic revolutionary character of this current — its determination to fight for the needs of the masses, and its refusal to subordinate those needs to any kind of deal with imperialism.

We have also recognized, and must continue to recognize, that Castroism, as a distinct ideological current, suffers from a number of theoretical and programmatic weaknesses resulting from its specific historical development and the dependence of the Cuban workers' state on the USSR for material assistance. These weaknesses have resulted, in cases like Chile for example, in political support by the Castroists to the Allende regime, which contributed to the political disarming of the Chilean masses. Similar policies have been followed with regard to bourgeois political figures such as Velasco in Peru, Torrijos in Panama, and Manley in Jamaica. But up to now it has not been its weaknesses, but the proletarian revolutionary perspectives of this current which have proven decisive for the specific conditions in Central America and the Caribbean today.

The course of the revolutions in Nicaragua and Grenada, like the Cuban revolution before them, stand as striking confirmation of the theory of permanent revolution as developed by Leon Trotsky, and defended over the years by the Fourth International. Many have charged that permanent revolution is deficient in its understanding of the need for an alliance with the peasantry, and also that it misunderstands the question of whether socialist or national-democratic tasks will predominate in the initial stages of a revolutionary process in the less developed countries. But the difference between permanent revolution and all counterposed strategies for the colonial revolution has, in reality, nothing to do with these questions. These are slanders, first launched by Stalin, and repeated since the 1920s by all opponents of revolutionary Marxism. Such accusations cannot be substantiated, and in fact will be thoroughly refuted by any serious study of Trotsky's

writings, or of the programmatic documents and practice of the Fourth International.

The real difference between permanent revolution and other revolutionary strategies is over what kind of government can forge the worker-peasant alliance and carry out even the national and bourgeois-democratic tasks of the revolution. Since the Russian revolution of 1917 and the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, revolutionary Marxists have definitively answered this question by saying that only a government dominated by the proletariat can accomplish these tasks. This is the *form* that the alliance of the workers and peasants takes. And although such a government may *begin* by concentrating on bourgeois-democratic tasks, it cannot limit itself to these, and will in fact be immediately faced with the necessity of taking measures against bourgeois property.

The validity of this perspective is confirmed by the experiences in Central America and the Caribbean today. As these revolutions deepen and develop it becomes clearer and clearer that the only real alternatives available in the colonial world are between continued subservience to the rule of imperialism and the world market on the one hand, and a decisive break with this tyranny and the establishment of a workers' state based on nationalized property and a planned economy on the other. Only a predominantly proletarian government can clearly and resolutely move forward with this perspective. It is the proletarian revolutionary character of the FSLN and the NJM which makes the further progress of these revolutions possible.

This does not say anything about the exact tempo of development in any specific case, the exact forms of class alliances, or what concessions might be necessary or desirable for such a proletarian government. But the overall direction in which the revolution must move is clear — it must create a workers' state, or it will be destroyed. The Castroist leadership in Cuba correctly solved this problem. The New Jewel Movement and the Sandinistas show every indication of doing the same. El Salvador, Guatemala, etc. will also be unable to find any other solution to meeting the demands of the masses if the revolutionary forces succeed in conquering power, and this will be the natural course of these revolutions — following the example of the Cubans, Nicaraguans, and Grenadans before them.

Revolutionary Marxists, particularly in the United States, must demonstrate our whole-hearted and unconditional support for the revolutionary process unfolding in Central America and the Caribbean. We can do this by mobilizing direct political and material support, as well as by building the broadest possible united front opposition to U.S. aid for counterrevolutionary forces, or direct intervention by Washington with its own troops. Supporting the struggles of the Grenadans, Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, and other peoples against imperialism and for socialism is an inherent part of fighting for the socialist revolution in the United States of America.

April 9, 1983

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Information, Education & Discussion

Bulletin In Defense of Marxism

Published by expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party (U.S.A.)

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A Platform to Overcome the Crisis in the Party

There is a ferment in our country which reflects the crisis of capitalism--growing anger over plant shut-downs, unemployment, inflation, take-backs and cutbacks, home and farm foreclosures; a rejection of the imperialist schemes of U.S. policy-makers in Central America, the Middle East, and other areas in the third world, and a rejection as well of the threat of nuclear war; along with resentment over the assault on Blacks, Hispanics, women, and other oppressed groups. Increasing numbers of people are beginning to relate these issues to each other, to turn away from "politics-as-usual" and to seek avenues for action. The consciousness of the American working class is shifting leftward. The opportunities for revolutionary socialists are increasing. There is much work to do.

A similar ferment can be found in other advanced capitalist countries. Even more intense is the insurgent spirit in the underdeveloped capitalist countries, where the dynamic of permanent revolution is asserting itself--especially in Central America--with unequalled force. And in the bureaucratized workers' states, particularly in Poland, the consciousness of the working class is advancing under the blows of the privileged bureaucracy--setting the stage for the political revolution which will make the workers the masters of the factories. Now as never before the revolutionary Marxist program of the Fourth International is being confirmed and enriched. And on a world scale, too, the responsibilities of our movement are immense.

It is a great tragedy that faced with such opportunities and challenges, the majority leadership of the SWP has demonstrated a lack of confidence--in our traditions and program, in the working class and its struggles, and in itself. This leadership has broken from our theoretical and programmatic foundations. They have openly begun to reject our ties to the world Trotskyist movement organized in the Fourth International. They have more and more withdrawn from intervention and participation in the mass organizations of the working class and its allies. And they have undertaken a series of anti-Leninist organizational measures in order to silence and slander those who criticize their new line. These developments threaten the future of the revolutionary party.

Party membership has declined drastically, due in part to a lack of recruitment and an inability to consolidate those we do recruit; but also, in large measure, as a result of an irresponsible squandering of long-time cadre--the most precious resource of any Marxist party. During the same period the objective situation for growth has become more and more favorable, and other left groups in this country are experiencing an expansion of membership and influence.

The party ranks will have to intervene in order to reverse the current disastrous policies.

The improper introduction of a new line

An anti-Trotskyist course was first signaled in speeches by Jack Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters at the 1980 Oberlin educational conference. But instead of stating their new perspectives fully and openly to the

party membership so they could be discussed prior to our 1981 convention, the majority leadership presented only a few oblique references in the 1981 draft political resolution downgrading the Fourth International and counterposing to it a nonexistent "new mass Leninist international," a perspective which has, and can have no substance today.

Throughout the entire 1981 preconvention period, and during the convention itself, spokespeople for the Political Committee denied that they had embarked upon a path away from Trotskyism and the Fourth International. Only two days after the conclusion of the 1981 convention, however, at an expanded Political Committee meeting which heard a series of "informational" reports on "historical" studies done by central party leaders, an open attack was launched upon the theoretical traditions which our movement has defended since the founding of the American Left Opposition in 1928. Since August 1981, through a series of articles in our public press and talks by party leaders, none of which has been discussed or approved in any party body, sweeping new theoretical perspectives have been laid out:

1) The article in the November 1981 International Socialist Review by Doug Jenness entitled, "How Lenin Saw the Russian Revolution" began this revisionist process. Jenness asserted that Lenin's pre-1917 concept of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry "effectively armed the Bolsheviks to carry through their historic task." This statement clearly heralded the beginnings of a criticism of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

2) This implied criticism became an open polemic in the second article by Jenness, "Our Political Continuity with Bolshevism" (ISR, June 1982). Here it is explained that Trotsky was wrong about permanent revolution from 1905 to 1917, and that had the Bolsheviks adopted Trotsky's theoretical perspectives it would have "increased the likelihood that the party would have failed to take power in October 1917." In addition, Jenness repeats a number of slanders first raised by the Stalinists, such as Trotsky's "underestimation of the peasantry."

3) A rejection of Trotsky's pre-1917 concept of permanent revolution logically required a rejection of all of his subsequent work on this question as well, since this was based on his early approach and affirmed its correctness. At the December 1982 plenum of the SWP National Committee, Barry Sheppard presented what was described as his "personal view" that Trotsky had developed an incorrect and sectarian understanding of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27. Various distortions of Trotsky's actual positions were necessary in order for Sheppard to establish this idea--for example that Trotsky called for "instant expropriation" of the Chinese bourgeoisie. By rejecting Trotsky's analysis of China, Comrade Sheppard has broken definitively with the theory of permanent revolution, since it is precisely as a result of the 1925-27 experience that Trotsky confirmed his theory and gave it worldwide application. In declaring this to be a sectarian error, Comrade Sheppard repudiates our most fundamental programmatic position.

4) This repudiation of our traditions was carried to its highest stage so far in the speech by Jack Barnes at the Chicago YSA convention, "Their Trotsky and Ours, Revolutionary Continuity Today." Not only did he repeat Comrade Sheppard's rejection of permanent revolution, but he stated that the only period in which Trotsky was a real revolutionary

Marxist was from 1917, when he joined the Bolshevik party, until around the time of Lenin's death in 1924--with an occasional correct position before and after that period, such as on German fascism in the 1930s. Our revolutionary continuity with Lenin and Marx, Barnes explained, was blurred in the process of Trotsky's fight against Stalinism. In this way Barnes called into question the entire activity of Trotsky's last exile, including the founding of the Fourth International, and went so far as to predict that, "None of us will call ourselves [Trotskyists] before the decade is out."

All of these profound revisions were unveiled in the seventeen months after the end of the last SWP convention (and there is no reason to believe that we have reached the end of the revelations). Repeated requests even for the opening of a literary discussion on these questions have been rejected. In this way the Barnes leadership has fundamentally changed our most basic programmatic precepts without any discussion by the membership before the convention or since, and even without any discussion in the leading party committees. Such a mode of functioning is in complete contradiction to all Leninist norms.

Barnes's rejection of permanent revolution inevitably leads in the direction of an adaptation to the methodology of the Menshevik-Stalinist theory of stages. The theoretical revival of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" under the name of the "workers and farmers government" represents a step in that direction.

The term "anti-imperialist" is also being given a meaning different from its traditional one. The majority leadership is moving toward using "anti-imperialist" in the same way as it has traditionally been employed by Stalinists and other class-collaborationists--to justify subordinating an anti-capitalist perspective in the colonial world to a strategic alliance with the national bourgeoisie; and worse, to rationalize political support to radical neocolonial bourgeois regimes in the name of their alleged "anti-imperialist" character. This can be most clearly seen in the majority line on events in Iran, and it also underlies recent errors on our orientation to the Palestinian struggle.

The recent evolution of the Barnes leadership has also been marked by the beginnings of a rejection of Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet Union and of Stalinism. A hallmark of our movement has been our program for a political revolution in those workers' states where a hardened, counterrevolutionary bureaucratic caste must be overthrown by organs of workers' democracy. Our party press is virtually silent on this question in response to the Polish events, and the central leadership has begun to substitute the incorrect, gradualist concept of "regeneration" or "democratization" of the workers' state.

Our party also has a rich tradition of defending the rights of dissidents in the deformed workers' states through petition campaigns, meetings and demonstrations in which we have sought to organize all those left-wing forces who would join with us in common action. Yet even before the crackdown on Solidarity in December 1981 the leadership of the SWP not only refused to initiate such activity, but attacked other left-wing forces in the U.S. and elsewhere that have campaigned in solidarity with Solidarity. The party has failed to actively fight against reactionary forces which have sought to transform the struggle of the Polish working class into cheap anti-communist propaganda, being content instead to denounce them from the sidelines. What's more, the refusal to mobilize support for the Polish workers is rationalized by

wrongly counterposing the process of social revolution in Central America to that of political revolution in Poland.

It is certainly no surprise that these basic programmatic revisions have been accompanied by an ever-increasing series of attacks on the organizational expression of our program on a world scale--the Fourth International. This has included slanders and falsifications directed against the United Secretariat and against individual sections (most notably the Mexican PRT), and presented internally to the party membership in the form of "informational" reports. There have also been a series of public attacks on the Fourth International in the press and in Barnes's Chicago speech. Yet despite these complaints about the political line of the International and its sections, the SWP majority leadership has failed to present even one resolution or line document for a vote in any international body in counterposition to the views of the majority. Such an approach is completely irresponsible. And at the same time, the SWP is the only section or sympathizing group in which the leadership has prohibited rank and file members from collaborating on articles for the International Internal Discussion Bulletin.

Only one conclusion can reasonably be drawn from these facts. All of the assertions by party leaders before and during our 1981 convention--that no question was being raised about basic program or about our party's relationship to the Fourth International--have proven to be deceptions. The central leadership has organized itself as a factional grouping which rejects our most fundamental past theoretical perspectives and has set itself the task of changing the program on which our party was founded and built. This reflects in the final analysis a break from our basic strategic orientation to the working class. Rejection of the theory and program of proletarian revolution can only express rejection of the liberating historical role of the workers. This lost confidence will inevitably be replaced by new-found faith in other class forces.

A sectarian policy in the U.S.A.

This loss of confidence in the working class is also illustrated by an increasingly sectarian approach to all political life of the masses in the United States, which has accompanied the process of liquidation of the party's program. Party members are systematically prevented from taking even modest responsibilities in the unions, women's organizations, antiwar committees, Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, and other minority groups, student groups, human rights coalitions, etc. In the immediate capitalist assault the leadership sees only defeats in store for workers and their allies. This analysis is then used to justify and rationalize a purely propagandist and abstentionist orientation toward confrontations and skirmishes that are taking place now in the class struggle. No action program, however modest, is developed to attempt to guide these real struggles. The party is overlooking its basic task, that of providing a political perspective for working people. Demonstrations and other defensive actions are dismissed as insufficient (and apparently therefore of little value). Although actions that do take place are sometimes covered favorably in the Militant, this does not generally reflect any serious involvement by the party.

The ability of the ruling class to divert some struggles into channels that don't threaten capitalist interests is consistently exaggerated and used as an excuse for not offering our own perspectives. Our failure in this can only contribute to the fulfillment of the central leadership's prophecy of struggles being diverted by bourgeois and pro-bourgeois forces, thereby creating unavoidable setbacks and defeats in the current phase of the class struggle. Yet it is noteworthy that the recent period has been marked by a number of important victories which have been achieved when workers developed the unity and strength to resist.

A deep pessimism and ultimatism pervades the leadership's orientation, or lack of one, to the unions and other social movements. We lecture abstractly about how only a labor party can reverse the tide of defeats. More recently the "workers and farmers government" slogan has tended to replace the labor party as the solution to all problems of U.S. workers. While such statements are correct in the abstract, they have in practice been falsely counterposed to our participation in the mass movements and to a program of concrete proposals for action.

The growing antinuclear movement has been characterized by the leadership as at best a diversion from the task of organizing opposition to U.S. policies in Central America, and at worst as "pro-war." Instead of participating in this important development and helping to sharpen its perspectives, we stand on the sidelines as carping critics. The SWP majority leadership ignores or denies the fact that antinuclear demonstrations have already reached a million in size, and have regularly included and featured speakers and slogans opposing U.S. intervention in Central America. Several hundred local county and state labor bodies have formally joined this movement--directly counterposing the U.S. war budget to the need for social services, education, and jobs. Yet all that the party leadership can see is the Democratic politicians who try to manipulate this movement for their own ends.

Even the tasks of defense of the Central American revolution, of which the Barnes leadership professes to be the only true champion, have not been carried out. The tactic of the united front on the broadest possible basis in defense of the principle of self-determination is being abandoned. We have failed to adequately explain what is wrong with the "negotiate now" slogan--presented by the C.P., CISPES, and others--as a demand for this movement, and thereby have defaulted in our responsibility to explain that the U.S. government has no right to negotiate any aspect of the future of any people on earth. While fully supporting the right of the Salvadorans to conduct such negotiations, the U.S. antiwar movement must demand simply that our government get out and stay out of Central America. It is this perspective which can most effectively organize working people and their allies in this country.

In recent months the SWP leadership has made a turn, but not a correction. They now proclaim themselves to be the one and only true builders of the World Front in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. But they have presented this perspective in counterposition to the real forces--whatever their inadequacies--that have actually been involved for the last few years in Central America solidarity and

anti-U.S. intervention work. This can only be a hopeless sectarian exercise. We must begin now the necessary process of joining with all other forces who can be drawn into a broad, non-exclusionary movement around the basic slogan of "U.S. Hands Off Central America."

A false approach to the working class

While the severity of the assault on working people mounts, our party's response has been focused almost exclusively on propaganda tasks. But even this necessary work of patiently explaining the fundamental causes of the current capitalist crisis and the socialist alternative to it, through our press, forums, election campaigns, classes, etc., is projected incorrectly. The education of working people must be connected to the fight-backs and mobilizations that are occurring--however limited and embryonic they may be. It is mainly through participation in these day-to-day struggles that the working class as a whole educates itself, and gains the experience necessary to understand a socialist perspective. Through this process of participating in real battles we also learn how to make the generalizations in our transitional program concrete and comprehensible to working people. And such participation will lead toward the recruitment of workers, reversing the drastic decline in party membership, and transforming the character of the party so that workers will feel comfortable in it.

Ironically, the refusal to participate in the real struggles of the working class has frequently been justified by the party leadership in the name of "deepening the turn." But the abstentionist policies, in reality, lead us only to isolation from the masses. No intelligent worker will take seriously those who claim to aspire to the leadership --of nothing less than the proletarian revolution--but who refuse to take any responsibility for the most elementary and modest tasks of the day. We must play a role in these still limited fights, even if we know that they are likely to lose given those limitations. To refuse to do so, counterposing instead more revolutionary battles to come in the future, is an elementary error. It will guarantee only our continued isolation today, and prepare the ground for opportunist "overcorrections" or further sectarian policies tomorrow.

Our real isolation from the workers is further compounded by job-hopping. A cavalier attitude toward holding a job is deliberately promoted, making it difficult or impossible for comrades to acquire the necessary experience in or knowledge about the struggles in their industry, making them perennial newcomers who cannot speak with authority, and alienating us from workers who cannot afford this luxury. The policy of reassigning comrades from industry to industry has also left them with lowered seniority and thus more vulnerable to lay-offs. All of this undermines our ability to build on-going, functioning fractions.

This frivolous attitude toward work engenders a parallel attitude to the problems that workers face in their day-to-day lives. It impedes the mutual influence exerted between our party and the masses. All of the conditions which caused us to adopt the perspective of the turn in the past remain valid today. The turn remains a necessary and central task. But there can be no turn to the working class without taking part in the day-to-day struggles, and without going through similar life experiences with our co-workers. Only by rooting ourselves in our jobs

and in our unions, and in the other fighting organizations of working people, can we begin a genuine turn.

It will certainly be necessary for us to occasionally reorient our cadre from one industry to another, and from one city to another, in order to take advantage of new opportunities. But a serious and deliberate policy along these lines has nothing in common with the current "revolving door" approach to building factions.

The attack on our organization and our norms

The party's withdrawal from mass work means that its consciousness is turned inward. Routine propagandist activities are portrayed as great campaigns and become a substitute for other necessary political interventions. Any modest successes are touted as "qualitatively" superior to previous accomplishments because they are supposedly garnered as "part of the turn." The turn, used in this way and completely abstracted from the real struggles of the workers, takes on the character of a magical incantation used to dispose of all criticism and conjure away all failure.

Branch and fraction meetings are more and more stripped of any decision-making vitality, and their sole function has become to implement decisions made by a hierarchy of "higher bodies." These new organizational methods developed by the Barnes leadership were originally presented under the heading of "political centralism." As the party is commanded to mark time, and comrades are effectively insulated from any contact with the real world, our proletarian program is being systematically dismantled and discarded.

The new political line has been gradually introduced into the party through cryptic plenum reports as well as through speeches and Militant articles. Any discussion by the party membership of these sweeping new political positions has been declared illegal and grounds for expulsion--an attempt to "reopen pre-convention discussion" without authorization. Those who do speak out against the programmatic revisions have been ordered to "cease and desist" and are slandered as having capitulated to imperialist pressures. Meanwhile the leadership publicly pursues its new line.

Tendencies and factions in the party have been virtually outlawed. Correspondence, even between members of the national committee, has been declared illegal. The right to meetings and discussions between members of the N.C. (not to mention rank and file comrades) has been severely restricted, even during plenums. Branch decisions have been regularly overturned. Comrades in San Francisco were transferred to other branches against their will, an action that was justified on the grounds that "a working majority" should be created for the branch executive committee. This stands on its head the correct relationship between a branch and its executive committee.

This upside-down relationship between the party and its subordinate committees is extended to the point where Jack Barnes, alone, can make a public speech challenging the decisions of every previous convention of the SWP. Divorced from democracy, centralism of this kind can only create a caricature of Leninist organization.

An unrestrained attack on party democracy is a necessary expression of the leadership faction's theoretical and political assault on Trotskyism, which can only be accomplished by muzzling the party ranks, particularly those cadres who have truly assimilated our past traditions. The most serious manifestation of this anti-Leninist organizational campaign is the recent wave of trials, on the very eve of the period in which our pre-convention discussion would ordinarily open, which raise serious questions about the possibility of a democratic process now or in the future. How can comrades freely express their opinions if any disagreement with the official line is grounds for punitive reprisals?

An alternative program

In order to defend the party against this deadly attack on revolutionary Marxist-Leninist theory, program, and organizational principles we are announcing the formation of the Opposition Bloc--a coalition of the Fourth Internationalist Caucus, the Trotskyist Tendency, and other currents and individuals in agreement with the general line of this platform. The signers of this platform have had disagreements on some questions in the past. However, the following points represent a principled basis--covering the fundamental issues at stake in this discussion--for our common struggle to reverse the present course of the leadership:

(1) We support the general line of the following documents and articles which have been previously published:

"The Cuban Revolution, the Castroist Current, and the Fourth International," IEC resolution adopted May 1981 (Intercontinental Press, October 19, 1981).

"Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland," IEC resolution adopted May 1982 (International Internal Discussion Bulletin No. 6, September 1982).

"The Iranian revolution and the Dangers that Threaten it," minority resolution from the February-March 1982 N.C. plenum (International Internal Information Bulletin No. 1, May 1982).

"The Iranian revolution four years after the February 1979 insurrection," United Secretariat report by Andre Duret adopted May 1982 (International Viewpoint, March 31, and April 18, 1983).

"The Debate Over the Character and Goals of the Russian Revolution," by Ernest Mandel (IIDB No. 3, June 1982).

"Lenin and the Theory of 'Democratic Dictatorship,' A Reply to Doug Jenness," by Les Evans (IIDB No. 2, May 1983).

(2) The revolutionary Marxist program defended by the Trotskyist movement remains today the only expression of a rounded and complete perspective for the world revolution, the legitimate continuation of Leninism. It is firmly based on the world revolution carried through by the working class and its allies as the indispensable prerequisite for a socialist society. It rejects all theories of building socialism in a single country, as well as all forms of class collaboration.

(3) The Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution has been confirmed by the whole history of the 20th century beginning with the October 1917 revolution in Russia, as well as in the post World War II overthrows in countries like Yugoslavia, China, and Vietnam. It has been confirmed by the Cuban revolution and its validity is being demonstrated once again today by the revolutionary process in Nicaragua and Grenada. We reject all attempts to revive Lenin's pre-1917 theory of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry--discarded by Lenin himself--as a substitute for permanent revolution.

(4) The founding document of the Fourth International, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International," popularly known as the Transitional Program, which bases itself on the entire previous experience of the working class movement, provides the only programmatic perspective and method that fits the workers' needs in this period on a world scale. All other programs developed or inherited by our opponents--Social Democrats, Stalinists, or sectarians--offer no serious substitute worthy of consideration. We must consistently apply and develop this program in real life--in the unions, in the antiwar movement, in unemployed work, in women's rights and Black liberation organizations, among the youth, and in other spheres of the class struggle (for example as expressed in the general line of the 1979 World Congress resolution, Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation; and the 1969 SWP resolution, A Transitional Program for Black Liberation). To apply the transitional program means the party must end its policy of abstention from the day-to-day struggles of the working class and its allies.

We also reaffirm the relevance and importance of the "Theses on the American Revolution" adopted at the 1946 convention of our party. This document clearly explains the necessity for American revolutionists to concentrate their efforts on making a revolution in this country: "This presupposes first of all an attentive study of America and a firm confidence in its revolutionary perspectives. Those who are content with the role of commentators on foreign affairs--and it is surprising how many there are--or that of a Red Cross society to aid other revolutions in other countries, will never lead a revolution in their own country; and in the long run they will not be of much help to other countries either. What the other countries need from us, above everything else, is one small but good revolution in the United States" (James P. Cannon, Writings and Speeches 1945-47, p. 293).

This Leninist perspective of attention to, participation in, and attempting to provide leadership for the struggles of American working people must become an integral part of our turn to basic industry. It must be carried out alongside of and in conjunction with our tasks as socialist propagandists and opponents of U.S. war on the job. The turn--and its central organizational goal of a party rooted in and composed in its majority of industrial workers--remains a completely correct and central task. But without a real involvement with the living mass movement, any efforts along these lines cannot be anything but a sterile exercise.

(5) We remain in political solidarity with the Fourth International as the existing nucleus of the world party of socialist revolution. We aim to create sections in every country; through fusions and regroupments as well as through individual recruitment. The goal of every section

in every country in the world is the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat under the democratic control of the workers themselves. Revolutionary workers' governments are not conceived merely as ends in themselves, but in the spirit of the Soviet government of Lenin and Trotsky, as the advance outposts of the world socialist revolution; and as the means by which the state will begin to wither away.

(6) The Trotskyist program for the political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers' states applies today with full force. It has been most recently confirmed by the inspiring example of over ten million Polish workers mobilizing in their own name, through their own class organizations, for their own class interests. The rise of Solidarity has had a profound impact on workers everywhere and will continue to provide a model for the revolutionary self-organization of the masses.

Although the Polish workers have suffered a serious setback at the hands of the counterrevolutionary bureaucratic caste headed by the Stalinist general Jaruzelski, they have not been crushed. The development of Solidarity will prove to be a dress rehearsal for the coming political revolution in Poland.

We have a historic responsibility to bend every effort to mobilize support for the workers in Poland and in the other degenerated and deformed workers' states--just as we rally to the aid of workers striving to overthrow capitalism in Central America and elsewhere. It is false to counterpose the political revolution in Poland to the social revolution in Central America; just as it would be wrong to counterpose revolution in the underdeveloped world to revolution in the imperialist centers.

(7) We support without any conditions the revolutionary struggles of the masses in Central America and the Caribbean against imperialist domination. We believe that the best solidarity we can express is the building of a massive, broad-based opposition in this country to U.S. intervention in the region, and to all aid for counterrevolutionary forces. In addition, it is also possible in the U.S. today to create real political solidarity with the revolutionary perspectives of Grenada, Nicaragua, and the freedom fighters in El Salvador, Guatemala, etc. We must play an active role in this process, including campaigns to explain the goals and accomplishments of these revolutions and to organize material assistance for them.

We seek to learn from, influence, and fuse with the best of the revolutionary movements that have emerged in the course of struggles such as those in Central America and the Caribbean. We reject the false characterization of the Castroist current as a variety of Stalinism, or as a counterrevolutionary force today in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Grenada, etc. Sections of the Fourth International place no sectarian obstacles in the path of fraternal collaboration, joint action, and ultimate organic fusion with all such revolutionary forces. But we also aim to bring to this process all of the lessons we have learned about the world historical struggle of workers and their allies for freedom. We must continue to loyally present our critical-minded view of the way forward at each stage in the fight against world capitalism.

(8) We are in full support of the Leninist concept of democratic centralism as the method of organizing a revolutionary socialist combat party. We reject all Stalinist distortions of this method, as well as all social democratic and capitalist alternatives to it. Democratic centralism must provide for the broadest possible democratic rights of the membership to discuss and decide questions before the party, and the greatest possible centralism in carrying out decisions of the majority after such a discussion.

Leninist organization requires full democratic rights for members to have access to information, exchange ideas with one another, and participate fully in internal life. All members should be active in party work to the extent of their ability to contribute; and each member has the right to fully express opinions on questions under discussion without fear of being victimized for holding an idea different from those of others. Comrades with minority views should be integrated into all leading committees as a means of enriching the decision-making process, and as a way of adding to the experience and understanding of both the majority and the minority.

We oppose the current restrictions on the formation of groups, tendencies, or factions in the party, which have the practical effect of prohibiting them during non-preconvention discussion periods. Our constitution and resolutions adopted by the party in years past do not contain any prohibition against the formation of such groups, and no one's permission to do so has been required. The right of the leadership to regulate the functioning of internal groupings should not be abused, and cannot be construed as constituting the right to prohibit them.

Comrades who have similar views must be free to organize themselves in one kind of grouping or another if they consider it necessary, and try to win a majority for their opinions--as long as this does not interfere with the work of the party. If we take the Russian Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership as our model, then the existence of internal groupings of every variety must be considered a normal aspect of party life.

We oppose the SWP leadership's position that they have the right to determine the political basis for minority groupings; decide who will and who won't belong to them; and be privy to all of their internal affairs. This is none of their concern. Each internal grouping in the party, whether majority or minority, has the right to organize itself as it sees fit, so long as there is no breach of party discipline.

(9) An essential concern of all sides in the current discussion must be to preserve party unity. This requires in the first place an end to the current policy of political expulsions and other disciplinary measures, or threats of such measures, on the basis of flimsy organizational pretexts. This is an inappropriate and bureaucratic means of dealing with dissent, and is used as a substitute for the necessary political discussion. The expulsion of loyal party members harms the party, cutting off some of its best activists and creating a climate of intimidation against other comrades holding dissident views.

We also oppose any abrupt changes in membership requirements or "norms" used as a pretext for pressuring members to quit the party.

It is imperative that all sides in this discussion reject any talk of a split, which would be completely unjustified. What must be on our agenda now is the essential discussion and clarification of opposing views. The majority must cease and desist from its campaign of repression and reinstate expelled critics of the Barnes leadership. The majority has the primary obligation to conduct itself in such a way as to allow our discussion to proceed and the political disagreements to be resolved in a free and democratic atmosphere. As the minority we pledge to continue, as we have in the past, our own efforts to ensure such a democratic discussion. Only if a correct policy along these lines is pursued by both sides can the party ranks, who have the ultimate responsibility to pass judgement on all questions, really make an informed and free decision.

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May 6, 1983

28 Theses on the American Socialist Revolution and the Building of the Revolutionary Party

(Submitted to the May, 1983 N.C. meeting by the Opposition Bloc)

1. The economic crisis of American capitalism has steadily deepened since the late 1960s with the end of the post-war boom. Not only have the forces which fueled the economic stability and prosperity of the 1950s and 60s exhausted themselves, they are rapidly turning into stimulants of severe economic dislocation and collapse.

The artificial expansion of industry and agriculture through unprecedented government spending (particularly military spending) has led to a swelling of the national public and private debt, becoming an immense burden on the economy. Europe and Japan, which US imperialism was forced to rebuild after the war in order to save the world capitalist system from crumbling, now produce more efficiently than the United States. Trade and tariff wars are on the rise. The international monetary system set up at Bretton Woods has collapsed. As the international depression becomes more generalized, millions of additional workers are thrown out of work in the industrialized nations. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries, hunger and starvation, continued displacement from the countryside, and a growing trade deficit are the order of the day. All capitalism in its death agony has to offer working people is austerity, greater unemployment, rising inflation and the looming threat of a major economic collapse.

2. The post-war expansion of American imperialism rooted the United States in the powder kegs of the world. The more the United States put the world under its domination, the more it became dependent upon the rest of the world, with all its threatening contradictions and upheavals.

3. The political crisis of US imperialism, intertwined with its deepening economic crisis, stems from its inability to drive back the advance of the world working class, particularly in the period opened up on a world scale in 1968 by the general strike in France, the Prague Spring, and the advance of the Vietnamese revolution.

Since World War II, although the working class in several countries has suffered severe blows, the world revolution has continued to advance. After the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949 and the Cuban revolution in 1959, came the historic defeats of US imperialism in Vietnam in 1975, and in Iran, Nicaragua and Grenada in 1979.

When the working class has been defeated -as in Chile in 1973- the defeat was only imposed by a combination of brutal repression and the betrayal of the reformists within the working class movement. In Portugal in the mid-1970s, the reformist perspective derailed the pre-revolutionary situation, leading it back into the swamp of a restabilized capitalist regime.

Beginning in the late 1960s, as the economic crisis of capitalism settled in, an entirely new stage of working class struggles opened up in the advanced industrialized nations and the bureaucratized workers states as well. The events of 1968 in France and Czechoslovakia were the first manifestations of this resurgence of working class combativity. They were sharp and clear expressions of the combined unity of the world revolution. The growing interconnection of the three sectors of the world revolution has been confirmed by the advance of the Central American revolution with the victory of the FSLN and the unfolding process of the Nicaraguan revolution. It has also been confirmed by the advance of the political revolution in Poland from 1970 to this day, and the growing struggle against austerity and militarization in the industrialized countries.

4. The international offensive by US imperialism and its assault at home on the democratic rights and standard of living of American working people has also met with resistance and the growing consciousness and combativity of the American working class and its allies.

This growing combativity was first expressed on a mass level in the latter part of the 1950s with the rise of the Black liberation struggle. It subsequently deepened with the outpouring of opposition to the Vietnam war, the rise of the women's struggle and the beginnings of mobilizations of the organized working class against the employers' austerity policies.

Although uneven, the post-sixties period has witnessed a development of the radicalization within the organized working class. The unions are becoming central arenas of the class struggle as the ruling class seeks to drive down wages and working conditions in order to shore up its faltering economy and maintain its gigantic profits.

This has been accompanied by a growing awareness among broad layers of the American people that foreign and domestic policy are two sides of the same coin. Both are carried out by the government in the interest of the ruling rich. Hitherto accepted premises and values about "American democracy" have been shattered by Vietnam and Watergate. Growing anger and ferment, and the development of fight-back movements and mobilizations, are fueled by the increasing distrust in the political institutions of American capitalism. These are fundamental traits of American political life.

5. Since Reagan took office, he has used his position to openly attack the American working class and to try to reassert US world-wide hegemony after its historic defeats in Vietnam, Iran, Nicaragua and Grenada.

The conscious policy to break PATCO's strike, cripple the union and disbar all its members as air traffic controllers was a warning to working people of the government's serious attempt to implement an austerity policy. Reagan's budget projections through 1988 show that per capita real spending for low income families will decrease 22 percent while military spending will increase 63 percent.

The announcement that \$19 million would be used to "destabilize" Nicaragua was an attempt to intimidate revolutionaries throughout Central America and to tighten the economic noose around the neck of the Sandinistas. Yet the ruling class has not been able to convince or bludgeon American workers into accepting these perspectives. The over-riding characteristic of this period is the polarization of class forces, and a mood of combativity among the masses.

6. The Reagan victory was by no means a popular mandate for reactionary programs. On the contrary. It was the expression of the increased distrust and disaffection with the two-party system by half of the eligible voting age population who preferred to abstain from voting. This attitude of cynicism and indifference to the two capitalist parties could only express itself in the negative given the complete lack of any independent expression of working class politics. And many of those who did vote for Reagan, cast their vote as a protest against the incumbent.

7. The absence of a labor party based on the unions has put its stamp on all aspects of the class struggle in the United States. This has prevented the working class from using its potential strength as an organized and independent political force. At the same time it has attenuated and put a brake on the developing crisis of US imperialism.

The tremendous working class upsurges during the thirties as well as those immediately following the Second World War did not lead to the creation of a labor party. This is the direct result of the counter-revolutionary policies of the reformist leaderships, particularly the Stalinists. They were able to channel this powerful movement back into the Democratic Party.

The consolidation of a labor bureaucracy in the context of the witch-hunt of the Cold War has left the labor movement still weaker. Today only one out of every five workers belongs to a union. Since the 1950s, the labor bureaucracy has joined with the ruling class to set up AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development), a front for the CIA. Organized labor -because it has tied itself to its class enemy- has not been able to repeal such anti-labor legislation as the Taft-Hartley Act despite the fact that it has spent millions to elect its "friends" in the two capitalist parties.

8. The Democratic Party has attempted to present itself as a coalition of the vast majority of the American people. But the Democratic-liberal-labor-women-minorities coalition which had been an indispensable mechanism of class collaboration and social pacification throughout the entire post-war period is continuing to disintegrate.

In the 1980 presidential election, just over 20 percent of the voting age population voted for the Democrats. This was a rejection of Carter's austerity policies and other attacks on the working class and its allies.

The 1982 mid-term elections are yet another indication of the growing crisis of the Democratic Party. Despite the incessant appeals of the labor officialdom to funnel the anti-Reagan sentiment back into the Democratic Party, the increase in the voter turn-out was small. The Reaganites did suffer important defeats, but these mid-term elections did not indicate that the masses had developed any new interest or confidence in the two-party system or in the Democratic Party.

Thus, with their political safety net torn, the American bourgeoisie fears that major class battles, which are already brewing, might manifest themselves in the independent political action of the working class and its allies. Discussions at labor conferences indicate a growing interest in the idea of a labor party which could pose an alternative to the austerity drive.

But so long as the working class is not able to break through the obstacles placed in the path of independent political action, the moribund capitalist system and its two-party structure will be able to survive its growing contradictions and crisis. Periods of respite for the Democratic Party, in this context, are not excluded.

9. The bi-partisan character of the ruling class assault is becoming clearer. The Democrats are unable to pose any significant alternative to Reagan's policies. In fact, they stand implicated in this austerity drive. It was Carter who drew up the plan to decertify PATCO, who allowed the ERA to remain stalled and who resurrected the plan for the draft.

But this does not mean that the bourgeoisie has reached a consensus as to how to confront the American and world working class. Heated debates and divisions have already surfaced over national and international policies. These are likely to increase. They may even lead to major fissures as the economic and political situation of US imperialism continues to deteriorate.

It is precisely their inability so far to demobilize and defeat the working class at home and abroad which is at the root of these divisions. In turn, these divisions can provide opportunities for the working class to gain confidence in its own ability to provide the solutions to the pressing problems of the day.

10. The combined economic and political crisis of US imperialism in a context where the American working class has not been defeated will objectively pave the way for the development of a pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situation in the period ahead.

This is not the 1930s, where the severe economic depression was accompanied by the crushing defeats of the world proletariat in Italy, Germany, France and Spain --resulting from the betrayals of reformist leaderships within the labor movement. The US ruling class under Reagan has moved forward on an increasingly reactionary course. But it is doing so in the context of an increasingly deteriorating situation for US imperialism. To achieve any long term solution to its crisis, it must destroy the unions, effectively abolish democratic rights and change the forms and institutions of class rule towards totalitarianism and fascism. It must also change the relationship of class forces on a world scale in favor of imperialism.

But this is not on the order of the day, On the contrary. The advance of the world revolution and the resulting crisis of reformism mean that the balance of forces is shifting to the disadvantage of imperialism. This will inevitably lead to major confrontations between the two contending social class -both at home and abroad- and to the development of explosive situations in the period ahead.

11. To say that the objective political situation is headed towards major convulsions and explosions by no means signifies that the victory of the working class is in any way guaranteed or inevitable in the coming struggles. The history of this century is full of tragic examples of revolutionary situations which were lost, not because of the lack of combativity of the proletariat, but because of its crisis of leadership.

12. The entire history of the world class struggle in the epoch of imperialism points to the need to resolve that crisis of leadership. For this, a world party of socialist revolution --a genuine mass Leninist International Party-- based on the historic, programmatic acquisitions of the world working class movement must be built.

For us in this country, this can only mean building the Socialist Workers Party as a revolutionary combat party, inseparably linked to the task of building the world party of socialist revolution. The history of the workers' movement has taught us that only by beginning with an international program, can national parties, rooted in the struggles of the working class, be built.

For us, this national and international party can only be built on the basis of the programmatic framework of the Fourth International. Only the Fourth International, although still small, expresses the historic continuity of the revolutionary Marxist movement. Only the Fourth International offers a revolutionary perspective and strategy for the working class and all the oppressed in all three sectors of the world revolution.

In order to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership, we in the Socialist Workers Party must affirm our central task of building parties of the Fourth International throughout the world based on our program as it has been developed --beginning with the works of Marx and Engels, the experience of the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution of 1917, the first four congresses of the Comintern, the documents of the Left Opposition, and the founding documents of the SWP and of the Fourth International.

We must continue to test and develop that program and the strategy on which it is based. The unfolding reality of the class struggle and our immersion in mass struggles on a national and international level is the best way we can confirm and revitalize our program. No alternative which attempts to short cut any of the essential lessons and experiences of the world working class that are capsulized in our program can provide a correct strategy for the world revolution today.

13. The continued upsurge of the world working class has begun to shake the control of the Stalinist and Social Democratic apparatuses over the workers' movement. The Polish crack-down sent shock waves through the international Stalinist apparatus, widening already existing rifts. Millions of working people in the advanced industrialized nations are turning towards their traditional organizations and parties, not because they are innately reformist, but because they hope to find in them a vehicle through which to advance their demands. However, their aspirations and illusions are beginning to frontally collide with the anti-working class policies of the Social Democratic and Stalinist leaderships. This is already occurring in the British Labor Party and in France, Spain and Greece where the working class first turned towards the mass Social Democratic parties. This in turn is leading to an extremely unstable situation within the reformist parties, with the likely growth of important left-wing developments.

14. In the United States, the union bureaucracy and the reformist leaderships of all stripes continue to place obstacles in the way of the independent working class struggles against the bosses and their two-party system. Concessions, class-collaborationism, belt-tightening and protectionism are all they have been able to offer working people.

In the context of the increased polarization of the class struggle and a growing distrust in the Democratic party, new appeals for class collaboration are likely to be advanced. The perspective of "gender gap" politics --a strategy advocated by NOW-- remains tied to the two-party system. In Chicago in the Spring of 1983, all the reformists and many so-called revolutionists supported Black Democrat Harold Washington for mayor, some of them on the basis that this was not an election per se but rather a referendum on racism. In the future, it is likely that these same forces will support some liberal Democrat for president on the basis that it is a referendum on Reaganism. The "united Front Against Fascism" (based on the assertion that Reagan is the first step in the direction of fascism) has already been hinted at by the Stalinists and is likely to be advocated by them in the near future.

However, if it proves impossible to channel the anti-Reagan wave back into the Democratic Party, the reformists may advocate and even take steps in the direction of forming an "anti-monopoly" or "all-people's" party. Such a formation could come into existence separately from the Democratic Party apparatus --around the Congressional Black Caucus, for instance.

Such a party would not lead toward the creation of an independent labor party based on the unions and rooted in the working class, but rather away from the possibility of waging an effective political struggle. These "anti-monopoly" or "all peoples'" parties blur class lines, obscure the need for working class solutions and serve a function similar to that of People's Front formations. They are dead ends for working people. The coming American revolution will be victorious only if the working class can avoid the trap of People's Frontism which only dooms the working class to impotence and thereby clears the road for fascism.

15. We in the Socialist Workers Party must redouble our efforts to build the revolutionary combat party which can solve the crisis of revolutionary leadership in this country and lead the American working class to power. The political climate is favorable for our growth.

From its inception, the American Trotskyist movement has been dedicated to this task. In collaboration with our co-thinkers in the Fourth International, we have concentrated on the one key element that can be prepared in advance by conscious effort --construction of a leadership capable of achieving success.

Today, we must proceed from the recognition that the SWP is still a small nucleus of the mass party we seek to build. We are a nucleus of cadres formed around the revolutionary-socialist program necessary to build such a party. We cannot be organizational fetishists. We understand that the development of the revolutionary vanguard party will require varied approaches including fusions, splits, entries, as well as simple organic growth through recruitment. But we also recognize that throughout this process we must defend and apply the programmatic conquests of the Fourth International --of the Socialist Workers Party.

In order for the revolution to be victorious in this country --particularly when the working class is up against the most powerful and centralized enemy on the face of the earth-- a Leninist combat party based on the principles of democratic centralism is necessary. It cannot be an amorphous, all-inclusive party.

The SWP and its program will be decisive in leading the working class to power in this country. As the Theses on the Coming American Revolution adopted at the 1946 SWP national convention clearly stated: "The task of the Socialist Workers Party consists simply in this: to remain true to its program and banner; to render it more precise with each new development and apply it correctly in the class struggle; and to expand and grow with the growth of the revolutionary mass movement, always aspiring to lead it to victory in the struggle for political power."

16. Our effectiveness in this surging movement and our prospects for building the revolutionary party depend on how deeply we root ourselves in the struggles of the American working class and its allies, on how correctly we apply the Transitional Program and method in these struggles, and on how boldly we apply the united-front tactic in the period ahead to help advance these struggles.

17. To build the revolutionary party, we must advance a program of independent mass action, union democracy and class solidarity which can signal the way forward towards forging a class struggle left wing in the labor movement.

To do this, we must involve ourselves in the daily life and struggles of the working class and its allies, seeking at every stage to win political influence for our party. We must stand in the front lines of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class. Only on the basis of such work within the trade unions and mass organizations can a successful struggle be waged against the bosses and reformist leaderships.

At all times we must combine an effective fight for the immediate needs of the class with the fight for its longer term interests. Emphasis on one to the exclusion of the other can lead either to opportunism (by downplaying the historic needs of the class) or to sectarianism (by being incapable of dealing with its present needs.)

18. As we participate in, and try to provide leadership for, the struggles of the working class, we must advance a program of transitional demands which grow organically from today's conditions and from today's consciousness and which can thereby help wide layers of the working class find the bridge between the present demands and the program of socialist revolution.

On the economic level, these transitional demands point towards production for human needs rather than for profit. They point to the need for the planned economy of socialism which can ensure this production. On the political level, they center on the necessity for the workers to establish their own party and government, and take control over their own lives.

Transitional slogans such as the escalator clause for all workers and a shorter work week with no cut in pay express demands that cannot be fully won by a single local or national union. Our goal in raising these demands, in addition to advancing class consciousness, must be to unite the entire working class and its allies behind central struggles. Such demands effectively point to a solution to the problems of inflation and unemployment.

19. A fundamental vehicle for giving expression to the need for class solidarity and unity is the united front tactic.

The united front tactic is simply an initiative whereby the revolutionary party proposes to join with all workers belonging to other parties and groups, and all the unaligned workers, in a common struggle to defend the immediate basic interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie. The main aim of the united-front tactic is to unify the working masses in the struggle for their own interests. The two inseparable tenets of this tactic are united action for any genuine step forward and organizational independence of the revolutionary party.

It is a tactic which is necessary because of the divisions within the working class. Unity is necessary not only within the walls of a single factory or industry for the fight against concessions, but also for such national political battles as the struggle against US intervention in Central America, the fight against nuclear power and weapons, and the fight for a labor party. The united front is a tactic which arises out of the need for the revolutionary party, which is not yet the recognized leader of the proletariat, to prove to the masses that it is ready to wage a common battle with anyone, so long as that battle lies on the historic road of the proletariat towards its emancipation from capital.

A correct use of this tactic will help win radicalizing workers and other activists to the revolutionary party and to its perspectives for transforming the unions and mass organizations into revolutionary instruments. It exposes the unwillingness of the reformist misleaderships to fight for the interests of the working class, and at the same time is the best method for carrying out the immediate fight against the capitalist through unity in action.

Every opportunity must be used to establish organizational footholds among the working masses themselves in the form of action committees, rank and file caucuses against concessions and for union democracy, and grouping that seek to advance the labor party as a generalization of such a class-struggle strategy. Such formations must correspond to the needs of the moment and to the level of consciousness and combativity of the working class.

20. In this country, the tactic of the united front will find its highest political expression in the struggle for the labor party based on the unions. This is the next historic step the working class and its allies must take.

The entire history of the American labor movement shows that the workers tend to resort to independent political action when their rights and gains are being attacked and when they find themselves defeated or frustrated in the economic field. With the growing political and economic crisis of US capitalism, and the growing ferment among the working masses, the pre-conditions for the development of a labor party continue to ripen.

The revolutionary party must pay increasing attention to the possibilities and openings which are beginning to present themselves for using a united front approach with the purpose of getting the unions and other mass organizations to take the first steps in launching a labor party. To do this, we must also pay closer attention to the rifts which are already beginning to occur (and which will inevitably deepen) in the trade union officialdom, particularly at its secondary level.

With the stormy developments of the class struggle which lie ahead, it cannot be pre-determined whether the labor party will be reformist in its first stage, or whether it will be impelled to go beyond the bounds of reformism from the outset. We should pose no programmatic pre-conditions to the formation of a genuine labor party based on the unions. If the labor party were initially under the influence of the reformists, we would demand that they break with the logic of capitalist production and satisfy the demands of the millions of workers they represent. It is by this method that we would counterpose our program to theirs. We would also maintain our own independent organizational expression with which to fight for such a program.

21. The coming American revolution will have a combined character. It will be a socialist revolution by the working class and its allies against the bourgeoisie. At the same time it will be a revolution of national liberation by Blacks and other oppressed nationalities.

Only through the establishment of workers' power in this country will this combined struggle be brought to a successful conclusion. Only a government based on the working class and all the oppressed will guarantee the democratic rights of all oppressed nationalities. There can be no solution to the national democratic demands of the oppressed nationalities apart from the solution to capitalist exploitation of the workers. The revolution, if it is to be victorious, must combine the uncompleted tasks of the democratic revolution --including their right to self-determination of all oppressed nationalities-- with the socialist revolution.

The working class character and composition of the Black and Hispanic community will make the national question a most explosive force on the political scene in the United States. It will play an essential role in regenerating the unions into organs of struggle. Black and Hispanic workers will play a vanguard role in all of the struggles of the working class.

The revolutionary party supports the independent organization of Blacks and other oppressed nationalities. This will advance both their own struggles for self-determination and the struggle of the working class as a whole. There is no contradiction between building independent organizations of the oppressed and building the multinational vanguard party in this country. For the revolutionary party to win over Black revolutionaries, it will have to be among the best fighters for the rights of the oppressed, not only in theory but in practice as well.

It cannot be pre-determined whether the formation of an independent Black party with a genuine following among the Black masses will give an impetus to forming a labor party, or whether a labor party based on the unions will emerge first with Blacks playing a central and leading role. Combined developments are also likely in which candidates independent of the bourgeoisie are jointly sponsored by labor unions and organizations of the Black community.

22. The struggle for women's liberation emerged in the late 1960s with a political character and social depth which firmly established that the fight for women's rights would be one of the driving forces in the coming American revolution. The fight for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion rights, no sterilization without consent, affirmative action and equal pay brought before millions of working people the issues of women's double and triple oppression in this capitalist society.

With the growing percentage of women in the work force, the struggle for women's liberation will also have a dynamic role in the class struggle similar in many respects to that of oppressed nationalities. Women as trade unionists will also be at the forefront of the fight to transform the unions and build a labor party which can qualitatively advance the fight for women's rights.

The revolutionary party has a special responsibility to support an independent women's movement and revolutionary socialist women within that movement can play a crucial role in providing it with valuable analyses, clear strategic and tactical perspectives and practical experience. Women's oppression is rooted in class society --and the dynamic of this movement challenges not only a class-based society, but its ideological underpinnings.

The women's liberation movement, to be successful, must go beyond the bounds of capitalist property relations, and requires the intervention of revolutionary socialists to lead the movement in this direction.

23. Young workers will be the vanguard elements in the coming American revolution. Student youth in the high schools and on college campuses have also demonstrated in the mass struggles of the 1960s and 70s --and most recently by their refusal to register for the draft, and their involvement in Central American solidarity efforts-- that they too are determined to fight against injustice and oppression. This indicates that they too can play an important role in the fight for socialism in this country.

In order to help advance the fightback against school budget cuts, for the right to a free education, against militarization and the draft, and against racist and sexist discrimination, the revolutionary party must allocate some of its forces to the campuses with major responsibilities assigned to the YSA for winning over student fighters. Youth is playing an important role in the revolutions in Central America, the Mid-East and Africa. This process will continue to inspire youth here at home.

24. Although working farmers represent an increasingly smaller percentage of the American population, their struggle for parity and against the economic stranglehold of the banks is playing a significant role in the developing radicalization. It further exposes the government as a supporter of the food monopolies and big business. The support of the American Agricultural Movement to the 1981 miners' strike is an example of the growing awareness about the interconnections between the struggles of working farmers and those of the proletariat. The fight of the unemployed worker against home foreclosure or eviction is also linked to the farmer's struggle against foreclosures. Their enemy is the same.

25. The international nature of the class struggle has a special impact in the United States because it is the most "advanced" of the imperialist countries.

The interests of the American working class are intimately bound up with the interests of US imperialism's greatest enemies --the workers, the oppressed, the insurgent forces in the world's three sectors. Within the American working class there is a growing sense of international solidarity with the struggles in Central America, South Africa, Poland and elsewhere. There is a growing understanding, as well, of the importance of the anti-austerity struggles of workers in advanced capitalist countries. And there is a growing rejection of the U.S. ruling class's inclination to use war, including the threat of nuclear war, to stem the tide of world revolution.

Today as never before, there is a basis within the consciousness of the American working class for an independent foreign policy of labor which has objectively revolutionary implications. A central task of our party must be to help advance the working class's internationalism in its consciousness and actions.

26. Revolutionary socialists have always appealed to the soldiers as a decisive element that must be won over to a revolutionary perspective --arm: in hand. During the Vietnam war, the party helped to orient the anti-war

movement around the soldier, using the slogan "Bring the GIs Home Now!" Special attention must be paid to supporting the democratic rights of soldiers, including their right to receive literature and to discuss government policy.

27. It is only in the context of a concretized propaganda and agitational campaign around the labor party, along with our active participation in the struggles of all the sectors of the working class and its allies, that we can correctly apply our slogan for a "workers' and farmers' government."

We must explain that in order to resolve the urgent problems confronting working people and to fulfill their demands, it is necessary to establish such a government --run and controlled by the workers and farmers themselves. This is a slogan which is capable of giving focus to the developing revolutionary struggles.

But in raising this slogan, we must be completely clear about the class content that we, as a proletarian party, give to it. As the Transitional Program states: "The formula of 'workers' and farmers' government' first appeared in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was definitely accepted after the October Revolution. In the final instance, it represented nothing more than the popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat."

We in the SWP must resolutely reject the slogan "workers' and farmers' government" in the bourgeois-democratic version as proposed by the Mensheviks in 1917 and by the Stalinists since the degeneration of the Soviet workers' state. We must reject this slogan when it is counterposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat; we can accept it in the same sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks, i.e. as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan. This slogan must be raised in opposition to all forms of people's frontism. It must be a bridge towards the coming American socialist revolution, and not some allegedly "necessary" intermediate stage in the revolutionary process between the bourgeois and proletarian dictatorships.

28. The coming American revolution will see the emergence of workers' councils or soviets as the forms of workers' power and democracy which can control the economy and the everyday functioning of society.

These councils will throw open the doors to all the exploited. All the political currents of the proletariat will struggle for leadership within them. They will arise only at the time when the mass movement enters into an openly revolutionary stage, and will initiate a period of dual power.

Only one of the two irreconcilably opposed social regimes which this dual power represents can emerge victorious. The fate of all humanity depends on the outcome. The alternative will be the fascist dictatorship and perhaps the eclipse of civilization, or the victory of the workers' councils, i.e. the dictatorship of the proletariat --and the socialist reconstruction of society.

May 8, 1983

