

Information, Education & Discussion

Bulletin

In Defense of Marxism

Published by expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party, Fourth Internationalist Tendency (F.I.T.)

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

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

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

Denied the right, specified in the SWP constitution and by Leninist norms, of full and free discussion of all programmatic changes, we were subjected first to gag rules and slander, and finally to wholesale expulsions by the leadership in order to facilitate their imposition of a new, revisionist line, without approval by the membership.

We are now forced to carry on this discussion from outside the SWP. Our intent is to foster discussion within the party by those sincerely seeking to defend a revolutionary Marxist program, as well as to bring about our own readmission.

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

**BULLETIN IDOM
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INTRODUCTION

When the plenum of the SWP National Committee convenes this month it will approve the Call for the thirty-second National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party. This will open pre-convention discussion, in which party members would ordinarily be expected to participate. However, this pre-convention period is not ordinary. The convention is twice postponed. Since the last convention the faction in control of the party has proscribed discussion of programmatic issues, and expelled all known oppositionists. The letter from the Fourth Internationalist Tendency to the NC plenum, the first item in this number of the Bulletin, is published for the information of our readers, inside and outside the party, as an initial contribution to the SWP's pre-convention discussion.

We also publish, at this appropriate time, the Platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. This succinct statement on the origin and the goals of the F.I.T. distinguishes it from the other tendencies that originated in the SWP. The others, unlike the F.I.T., have yet to define and publish a platform. Pedro Camejo who represented a Castroist current in the SWP and in the Fourth International is presently trying to organize this tendency through the North Star Network which, he says, needs no platform. Socialist Action is another political tendency that originated in the SWP, describing itself as "a public faction of the SWP." It tries to act like a rival party. Like Camejo it is in search of a platform. The SWP majority faction, organized by Jack Barnes, has announced its pro-Castroist orientation and its intention to build "a new Leninist International," but it has not yet published its platform for this New International.

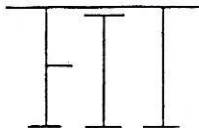
Other articles and contributions in this number of the Bulletin are in defense of essential democratic procedures in the organization of a revolutionary party. The appeals for reinstatement in the SWP by comrades Shils, Stewart and Weissman are substantially that. These three comrades were bureaucratically expelled, as were many others. Their appeals expose the bureaucratic practices of the present SWP leadership.

Our publication of suppressed documents suffers this time because of the need to publish other material. We promise to make up for this. We have managed to get in one of the many suppressed documents under the title "How the Opposition Tried To Prevent a Split." The material here was never before circulated outside the SWP National Committee. It indirectly reveals the determination of the dominant faction to expel the opposition. The article by George Breitman exposes the SWP leadership in another way. Part of their trouble is that, like all liars, they cannot remember everything they say and write. The letter by Mary-Alice Waters, introduced in the Breitman article, could qualify as a suppressed document because it is unlikely to be circulated by its authors.

The new policy of excluding political opponents and critics from public functions of the SWP is self-defeating, and we expect it will eventually be abandoned. Dorothea Breitman and other expelled comrades are doing what they can to hasten the day.

The tribute to the life of Carl Skoglund by David Riehle is a refreshing contrast to the schematic concepts of party building imposed on the SWP membership today by the present leaders. Skoglund met these types many times. He never discovered any effective way of dealing with them except through organization and education.

The last two articles are drafted to encourage further discussion on these neglected subjects. We initiated in Bulletin No. 3 the discussion on the personalized character of sometimes inexperienced and often bureaucratic regimes within working class organizations in the post-World War II period. Comrade Shils continues that discussion in No. 5. We hope this, and the discussion of working class radicalization, will continue.



Fourth Internationalist Tendency
c/o S. Bloom, 2186 E. 22 St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229

March 26, 1984

SWP National Committee

Dear Comrades,

If a normal timetable is followed leading to the party convention now scheduled for this summer, you will soon be holding a plenum and issuing the convention call. We urge you to take the opportunity of this plenum to consider some serious questions.

A major political dispute has arisen in our party and in our world movement since our last convention in 1981. It is incumbent on you as the leadership of the party to organize the kind of pre-convention period necessary to seriously discuss and resolve these fundamental programmatic questions.

Our undemocratic expulsions from the SWP puts a question mark over the coming discussion. How can all sides of the dispute be objectively judged by the membership if those who defend the historic programmatic positions of Trotskyism are silenced and if the threat of expulsion as a "secret factionalist" hangs over anyone who might even raise a question about current party policy? A "discussion" in which only one viewpoint is heard and which takes place in an atmosphere of intimidation is no discussion at all. Principled political disputes cannot be resolved unless differing views are fully expressed and discussed before decisions are made.

You have the responsibility to act in the best interests of the party as a whole. You must take steps to assure that the 1984 SWP convention is the culmination of a genuine democratic process. This has been made extremely difficult because of the expulsions and past prohibitions on discussion by the central leadership. We are faced with a most extraordinary, even unprecedented situation, where punitive organizational measures are taken before a genuine political clarification can occur. That is why it is now necessary to take extraordinary steps. We make the following proposals:

- 1) All comrades who have been expelled or forced to resign from the party because of their political views since the last convention, and pledge to abide by the decisions of the coming convention, should be reinstated with full rights for the pre-convention period. We in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency can make a pledge to abide by convention decisions in all sincerity. We have always acted in accord with the decisions of the SWP--even those we disagree with. Our only "crime" has been to seek the necessary discussion and democratic decision inside the party.

March 26, 1984

We want to raise a particular question about the readmission of Comrades Bloom and Lovell, who are now in the leadership of our tendency. It was a plenum of the NC which suspended them from membership in the party, and the coming plenum can reverse that decision. The charges that led to their suspension were based on the assertion that the four minority NC members refused to explain the reasons for the dissolution of the Opposition Bloc. But it is clear from the August 8 letter by Bloom and Lovell, and from the August 10 statement at their trial (both published in Bulletin In Defense of Marxism #4) that they did explain the reasons for this, and that the action taken against them was hasty--based only on one-sided conjecture rather than established facts.

2) If you will not reinstate those of us who want to defend a revolutionary Marxist outlook within the SWP, then we propose a more modest step: open the internal discussion bulletin to us, along with the oral pre-convention discussion in the branches. This would, of course, be unusual, but it is warranted given the unusual step that preceded it--the expulsion of all known or suspected opponents of the majority leadership's positions before the political discussion in the party could take place. If you have confidence in yourselves and in your new perspectives, you surely have nothing to fear and everything to gain from this opportunity.

Finally, on a different subject, a policy has been adopted to exclude recently expelled members from party bookstores, forums and other public activities. In the past we have had a conscious policy of never excluding anyone from a forum or SWP hall except if they threaten to disrupt it, or have a record of such disruption. You have no reason to believe that FIT members would engage in such activity; to do so, in fact, would be completely contrary to our political objectives. Before this policy was inaugurated many of us did attend public party functions, without a single case of disruption. It is not necessary to repeat all of the arguments on this which were made in letters by members of our tendency in the Twin Cities and New York dated January 30 and February 25 respectively (copies enclosed). This ban will have a destructive effect on the standing of the Militant Labor Forum as an open forum for debate within the working class movement.

We are also enclosing for your information a copy of the platform which has been adopted by our tendency.

Comradely,

Steve Bloom

Steve Bloom
For the FIT

PLATFORM OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY

I. Why We Have Formed the Fourth Internationalist Tendency

For over fifty years the Socialist Workers Party and its organizational predecessors have based themselves on the revolutionary Marxist program and method. The majority of our party has consistently fought off all attempts at programmatic revision. No other revolutionary party in world history has been able to maintain such an orientation for as long as the SWP.

Now, unlike in all past political struggles since the founding of the American Trotskyist movement, the central leaders of our party have issued a fundamental challenge to its programmatic continuity. They have undertaken a thoroughgoing revision of our Trotskyist heritage, prevented discussion of that revision by the party rank and file (twice postponing the party convention), and conducted a bureaucratic political purge of all known or suspected critics of their line. They have already dealt a serious, though not yet irreversible blow to our organization. If they are successful in definitively imposing their perspectives on the SWP this will be a tragic setback to prospects for creating a revolutionary Marxist vanguard in this country.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency was organized in February 1984, by SWP members who have been the victims of the leadership's political purge. Our purpose is to defend, maintain, enrich, and apply the programmatic foundations of the party--the scientific socialist acquisitions of the working class.

The continuity of our current as an ideological tendency in the party goes back to the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the SWP National Committee. We stand on the general line of the reports and resolutions introduced by this caucus beginning with its initial platform submitted to the National Committee on December 23, 1981. In addition, we maintain the views presented in the documents of the Opposition Bloc in the National Committee (of which the Fourth Internationalist Caucus was one component) from May to August 1983.

Historically we base ourselves on the programmatic record of our party and our International. Major documents of that record include the theses and resolutions of the first four congresses of the Communist International, 1919-1922; the "Transitional Program," 1938; the "American Theses," 1946; and the "Dynamics of World Revolution Today," 1963.

When we tried to defend this program in the SWP we were expelled. We are now compelled to organize as a separate current in order to present our views to the party ranks, and to pursue political activity in our unions, movement groups, and solidarity campaigns.

It is not our choice to organize a separate ideological tendency. We are appealing our expulsions both individually and collectively. We attach no conditions to these appeals. If we regain our place in the SWP, we will function on the basis of full membership respon-

sibilities and rights, as we have always done in the past, and will abide by all decisions of the party--even those we disagree with. But we continue to believe that loyal members have an obligation to try to change those policies which they think are harmful to the party.

Building the SWP means more than simply participating in the day-to-day tasks of the organization, though this is essential. It also means engaging in a struggle to try to correct mistaken policies which are derailing the party from its historic revolutionary course. Such a struggle is not only a right, it is a responsibility for serious militants who are concerned about and loyal to the SWP.

Even if we are forced to remain outside of the party, we will do what we can to build, defend, and strengthen it. We are not trying to create a rival party or a separate organization in competition with the SWP. In addition to attempting to convince the party to change its wrong perspectives, we have asked to work with the SWP in such areas as the 1984 election campaign, publication projects, sales of the Militant, and defense cases.

The current leadership accuses us of being "splitters" who are "hostile to the party." Our attitude toward party-building projects can be easily tested by accepting our offers of help. We want to do all we can to guarantee that there are no organizational obstacles to the all-important political discussion that needs to take place.

We will try to collaborate with the party in the movements and coalitions defending working people against the ruling class assaults in this country and around the world. Primary in this regard for revolutionary militants today is defense of the Central American revolution against the threat of invasion by the U.S. government. The American people must be educated and mobilized against this imperialist attack. We will join on a united front basis with any and all forces around the demand, "U.S. Hands Off Central America!" Whatever our differences on other questions, and whatever our past disagreements over this work, we cannot let them stand in the way of the greatest possible common effort in support of the Central American and Caribbean revolution.

II. In Defense of a Marxist Program

The future of the SWP as a revolutionary party is jeopardized by the programmatic revisions introduced by the majority leadership. The SWP retains its socialist aims and has not given up its class struggle approach to major questions such as independent political action by the working class. However, over the last few years the central leaders have attacked major elements of the party's Marxist, Leninist and Trotskyist theory and practice.

The SWP has in the past distinguished itself programmatically from all other tendencies in the working class movement by 1) its adherence to the theory of permanent revolution; 2) its call for political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers' states, combined with and as part of our defense of proletarian property relations; 3) its recognition of the interdependence of the three

sectors of the world revolution; 4) its application of the transitional method and the united front to the class struggle in this country; and 5) its defense of workers' democracy as a necessary basis for the functioning of the working class movement in general, and of the Leninist party in particular. The challenge of the Barnes leadership now questions each of these basic conceptions:

1) World history, from the Russian revolution of 1917 to the present day, has repeatedly confirmed the validity of the theory of permanent revolution. Far from being in contradiction with current developments in Nicaragua and Central America, as the SWP leadership asserts, permanent revolution is completely confirmed by these events. A successful revolution against imperialist domination in the colonial and semi-colonial world can be completed only if the old bourgeois state is totally destroyed and power is taken by those who will carry through a political and economic program in the interests of the workers and poor peasants. This is what the Marxist movement has traditionally labeled the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The revolution cannot stop with democratic reforms, but must push on to the socialist transformation of the economy. Only this can begin to break the grip of imperialist oppression, and set the stage for future progress. It is the course charted by the Sandinistas toward socialist development in Nicaragua that allows them to move forward today. Ultimately of course, the future of the Nicaraguan revolution, as of all other revolutions in the colonial and semicolonial countries, depends on the advance of the world revolution--in the last analysis to the imperialist centers themselves.

A correct understanding of permanent revolution--of the necessity for proletarian revolution in the developing countries--is in no way contradictory to the idea of alliances by the proletariat and poor peasants with other class forces. In fact, a proletarian revolution in an underdeveloped country requires such alliances. Trotsky's theory is not in contradiction with the possibility of varying tempos for the overall process, or with the basic concept of the workers' and farmers' government developed by Joseph Hansen, or with the idea that Nicaragua today has a workers' and farmers' government--as Grenada did from 1979-1983.

In their polemics against Trotsky, Barnes and Jenness claim these things to be contradictory with the theory of permanent revolution. Their public attacks on our traditional program are little more than warmed-over slanders, straight from the Stalinist school, long ago thoroughly refuted by Trotsky himself--ideas which were correctly dismissed by Barnes and Jenness as well before 1981.

The rejection of permanent revolution by the Barnes leadership has had a damaging effect on the SWP's political orientation. One particularly striking example of this is the failure of the party press to rally to the defense of the Iranian workers and oppressed nationalities when they came under attack from the bourgeois-nationalist Khomeini regime. In the name of "anti-imperialism," the Militant and Intercontinental Press remained silent, and even at times expressed political confidence in the IRP government, while that government progressively organized the counterrevolution in Iran.

2) The SWP must return to our long-established understanding of Stalinism, and of the need for the workers of the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, etc. to rise up and throw off the bureaucratic yoke. Only a genuine revolution involving the masses themselves directly in the political process can remove this obstacle to socialist development.

"Political Revolution" must be the rallying cry of all revolutionary Marxists. We cannot allow the imperialists to get away with their masquerade as the best opponents of Stalinist tyranny. We must combat the bourgeois opponents of Stalinism, whose opposition is in reality only to the gains of the proletarian revolution. Our opposition to Stalinism is the exact opposite--the best means of defending the workers' states and extending the revolution.

The self-organization of the Polish masses and their resistance to the Jaruzelski government continue to be an inspiration for working people throughout the globe. Yet the Militant remains virtually silent about the struggle by the Polish workers against their bureaucratic overlords. This is a far cry from the ringing defense of socialist democracy and opposition to Stalinist dictatorship that were the hallmarks of our coverage of East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The new attitude toward Stalinism does not end with Poland. Gone are the days when the Militant was in the forefront of the fight to defend Soviet dissidents. Our press no longer exposes the crimes and betrayals of the Stalinist regimes, such as the failure of the Kremlin to raise a finger to help the Palestinian cause during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Even the terminology of "political revolution" is disappearing from the vocabulary of the SWP leadership. It is being replaced by new concepts, such as "democratization" and "regeneration" of the workers' states.

3) One of the fundamental political bases for the reunification of the Fourth International in 1963 was a common understanding of the interrelationship and interdependence between the three sectors of the world revolution. The text of the reunification document entitled "Dynamics of World Revolution Today," explained it this way:

"At the same time, it is important to recognize that the three main forces of world revolution--the colonial revolution, the political revolution in the degenerated and deformed workers' states, and the proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries--form a dialectical unity. Each force influences the others and receives in return powerful impulses or brakes on its own development."

The majority leadership of the SWP challenges this understanding. It declares that the center of the world revolution today is in Central America and the Caribbean. Such a statement is correct in important respects. The Cuban revolution was the first to prove that the anti-capitalist struggle can triumph under a non-Stalinist leadership. Cuba and the 1979 revolutions in Nicaragua and Grenada have inspired a new generation throughout the world. We in the United

States have a special responsibility in combating the U.S. threat to the revolutionary process in that region, since our own government is its main enemy.

The revolution in Central America and the Caribbean, however, important as it is and central as it is, must be viewed in a broader international context to be understood in its totality. The present SWP leadership treats these struggles as the beginning and end of the international revolutionary process today. This results in a superficial rather than serious analytical treatment of the class struggle both in the U.S. and around the world, and is dangerously one-sided. It has meant a downplaying or ignoring of other developments (most notably Poland).

4) Two of the hallmarks of the SWP's approach to the class struggle in the U.S., until the last few years, have been the creative application of the transitional method, and the use of the united front tactic in defense of the interests of the working class and its allies. These are fundamental for reaching and mobilizing working people in the U.S. today. Instead of using these tools, the leadership of the party has retreated from our previous interventionist approach to the class struggle and has substituted an abstract propagandism around our broad socialist program. Our role has, to a large extent, been limited to "engaging in discussions" and selling our press in our unions, at meetings and demonstrations.

Propaganda work which concentrates on our general revolutionary program is always an essential task no matter what mass activity we are involved in. It allows the proletarian vanguard to reach the most advanced workers who can be won to the ranks of our party. But when this is pursued as the only task, and is counterposed to real participation in the broader, more immediate day-to-day struggles of working people, it becomes sterile and self-isolating.

We must regain an understanding of the necessary political leadership role of our party in the labor movement and in the other vanguard movements for social change: the struggles of oppressed nationalities; of women; and the fight against imperialist war, which includes the anti-intervention struggle along with opposition to nuclear weapons and other imperialist armaments programs. Our historical experience and class understanding allows us to play a role in these developments which is unique and invaluable--a role that gained the SWP immense respect during the 1960s and early 70s, along with a substantial growth in membership.

Present party policy has had us standing on the sidelines, as commentators and critics, waiting for a "proletarian leadership" to emerge. This passive approach by the vanguard party is no aid to the emergence of such a leadership. It is, in fact a barrier to it. For a mass proletarian leadership to develop in this country, we need the conscious, active participation and intervention of revolutionaries--showing that we have good practical proposals about how to move forward, trying to unite with others around these proposals, and demonstrating that we are willing to pitch in to do the necessary work to carry them out. If we do not try to provide such leadership, we cannot expect anyone else to do the job for us.

Although the turn to basic industry is officially the guide to all other tasks in the SWP today, the majority leadership has, in fact, failed to carry out the turn in a consistent and fruitful manner. It is necessary now to really undertake the tasks of the turn to industry. We need to focus some attention on sinking roots and becoming established, as well as continuing to maintain a reasonable amount of flexibility when genuine openings arise. We should have a rounded approach to our industrial work--dealing with the every-day problems and trade-union concerns of our co-workers on the job, as well as carrying out our tasks as socialist propagandists. Undertaken correctly, these two sides of our activity will complement and reinforce each other, helping us to recruit members and supporters out of industry and become a real workers' party. This is very different from shifting comrades from job to job, from industry to industry, from city to city, and proclaiming ourselves a party of workers.

5) The change in the attitude of the central leaders of the SWP towards democratic functioning in the working class movement is nowhere more clearly revealed than in their present attitude concerning the membership of their own party. We must reject the harmful "new norms" implemented as an excuse for their purge of political dissidents. And we must reject the transformation of the concept of "norms" into rigid rules, applied schematically and in a factional and discriminatory fashion. We must revive the previous concept of norms practiced as flexible guidelines for our organization.

Genuine democracy in arriving at decisions in the Leninist party is the absolute pre-requisite, and dialectical complement of the centralism we must apply in carrying them out. These two concepts, democracy and centralism, are for us inherently linked and inseparable; neither one can exist in isolation from the other.

We call for a reversal of the present organizational policy and the reinstatement of all those expelled for their political views. The Barnes leadership is in the process of imposing a split on our party, and to that end has expelled ten percent of the membership since 1981. There is no principled basis at this time for such a split--either in our party or in our world movement. Fundamental political differences can never be resolved through punitive organizational measures. Now is the time for a real political discussion by the party as a whole, in which all sides can be heard and freely considered. Only this kind of discussion and decision by the party can resolve our current difficulties.

A one-sided discussion, with the muzzling of oppositional views, held in an atmosphere of intimidation and threats of disciplinary action, is no discussion at all. The fact that it is this kind of discussion which the Barnes leadership seeks reveals a complete lack of self-confidence, and a contempt for the party membership totally incompatible with the tasks of a Bolshevik leadership.

III. In Defense of the Fourth International

We are committed to building and strengthening the Fourth International. This means both a defense of its programmatic heritage and an active participation in the day-to-day political life of our world movement. All past experience has demonstrated that no national organization can remain on a revolutionary course for long without collaboration and common activity with other fighters in other countries.

The majority leadership of the SWP has presented a perspective of a "New Mass Leninist International," to be created by the Cubans and Nicaraguans. In pursuit of this non-existent international it has proceeded to progressively withdraw from the Fourth International, both politically and organizationally. All of the programmatic revisions and other errors that have been made derive fundamentally from this false counterposition.

Instead of learning from and utilizing the strengths of Castroism in their effort to establish ties with the Cubans, the SWP central leadership has adapted to that current's weaknesses, and is progressively abandoning our Trotskyist program. Such an approach cannot succeed and will ultimately lead to political bankruptcy.

No new mass Leninist international will ever be brought into existence if we abandon the programmatic lessons that have been learned as a result of long and bitter experience in the struggle for socialism, or if we abandon the organizational nucleus which today embodies those programmatic lessons--the Fourth International. Others in the history of our movement, like Healy and Moreno, have made the mistake of thinking that they could do without the Fourth International or find some substitute for it. Barnes is now in the process of repeating this mistake, and it makes no fundamental difference that he is doing so by rejecting Trotskyism, instead of asserting -- as Healy and Moreno do--a greater "Trotskyist orthodoxy."

IV. Why Our Main Priority Today Is Pursuing the Programmatic Struggle

The history of the working class movement, from the time of Marx and Engels to the present day, has been a history of the struggle to develop, maintain, and defend the program of proletarian revolution. The Second and Third Internationals, once powerful hopes for the liberation of humanity, degenerated to the point of becoming obstacles to socialism, and a long list of promising national parties have followed a similar path. It is not unusual for small groups of dedicated revolutionaries to be left to pick up the struggle, with nothing to rely on but their own defense of a genuine Marxist program and method.

Like the pioneer Trotskyists who were expelled from the Communist Party and founded the Communist League of America in 1928--the last time such a break in continuity occurred in the United States--our primary task must be to do all we can to fight to save the revolutionary party from degeneration. This will remain our focus

unless and until the SWP's political demise has been clearly and decisively demonstrated.

The Barnes leadership has gone quite far in its programmatic revisions and bureaucratic methods. But it is always a serious error to mistake the leadership of the party for the party as a whole. The political struggle to convince the SWP membership of the correct program and policy has not been definitively won either by those who would alter our historic program--or by those of us who would defend it. We will not concede that struggle without doing all we can to thwart the efforts of the Barnes leadership to transform the SWP.

The present programmatic challenge is a serious danger to the revolutionary vanguard in the United States. At the same time, it also presents an opportunity for a new generation of proletarian fighters in this country to renew its understanding of the program and learn to apply it in today's world. Ideological struggles that occur periodically are an inherent part of the growth and development of the revolutionary workers' movement, and force all members of the party to think through for themselves the problems at hand. This can be a rich educational experience which compresses in a relatively short time lessons that are otherwise learned through years of experience and study. Comrades involved in such debates gained a rich education from battles like that of the Left Opposition against the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International in the 1920s, and in the SWP against the petty-bourgeois opposition in 1939-40. We are now faced with the most serious challenge to our revolutionary Marxist program since 1940.

An ideological struggle to defend and enrich our theory and practice must be the primary item on our agenda today; the fight to win the party back to a Trotskyist program is our central task. We must take up this struggle because it is the best way to reach those who still support the incorrect course of the Barnes leadership as a result of political confusion or misplaced loyalties, and also for the education of those of us who seek to defend the real continuity of the SWP.

There can be no short-cut to the building of a revolutionary party, either in this country or on a world scale. The key question of party building is always the question of program. We must take the long historical view--the Trotskyist, the Leninist, the Marxist view--on this question. The leadership of the SWP believes it can link up with the successful revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean by jettisoning our programmatic heritage. This is a cruel deception and not a new one in the history of the Marxist movement. It is an error that has always had disastrous consequences if not reversed in time.

The active intervention of the party ranks will be necessary to either change the course of the present leadership or replace it with a new one. Although we are not assured of success in this effort, we can be sure that it is only by making the effort that we will influence the most serious comrades and win them to our cause.

Appeal of Adam Shils

Chicago, Illinois

January 7, 1984

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

I am writing to appeal my expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party. My expulsion should be overturned because I am guilty of no act of indiscipline. I refused to make the requested "repudiation" statement for the following reasons: it was impossible to develop an opinion on what took place at a two-day convention on the basis of a very brief oral report. In fact, the very first issue of The Militant quotes Lenin on the need for comrades to have full information before they develop an opinion. Lenin said that "It is necessary that every member of the Party should study calmly and with the greatest objectivity, first the substance of the differences of opinion, and then the development of the struggles within the Party. Neither the one nor the other can be done unless the documents of both sides are published. He who takes somebody's word for it is a hopeless idiot, who can be disposed of with a simple gesture of the hand."

No such opportunity opportunity was offered me by the PC sub-committee. No comrade could be expected to make a serious statement on the basis of the information in a seven to ten minute oral report. Furthermore, it must be stressed that the whole concept of repudiations and forced denunciations of other comrades is quite alien to the traditions of the Trotskyist movement.

I want to re-iterate what I told the PC sub-committee. I will certainly abide by party discipline on all questions. I have never been accused of indiscipline at any time while I have been in the party.

It is for these reasons that I request the Political Committee to place my appeal on the agenda of the appropriate party body. I urge the upholding of my appeal so that I can once again take my place in the ranks of the Socialist Workers Party in order to work towards our goal of the coming American revolution.

Fraternally yours,

Adam Shils

Adam Shils

cc: United Secretariat of
the Fourth International

Appeal of Larry Stewart

Newark, N.J.
Feb. 4th, '84

AN APPEAL FROM EXPULSION

N.C. SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

I appeal my expulsion from the party on the false charge of disloyalty. I deeply resent such a charge because there is absolutely no valid reason for it.

On Jan. 4th I was the subject of a hearing which consisted of a single question asked by Wendy Lyons accompanied by John Studer. She demanded that I "just answer yes or no" to a statement she had, at my insistence, written: "I repudiate the disloyal action of the minority delegates to the Cal. state convention in not repudiating the reporter's refusal to abide by the N.C. motion governing violations with Socialist Action."

My written reply: "I am/was not privy to minority delegation response and have no way of knowing what occurred, other than Wendy's account. Will not pass judgment."

A pre-prepared charge of disloyalty and a notice of trial, my name on both, were whipped out immediately. The trial was held the same day "late afternoon or early evening" without me. I was in fact on a granted leave of absence at the time.

It was a farcical, kangaroo court proceeding: "give em a fair trial, then hang em." No transcript of what was said, nor by whom. It was demanded that I fink, condemn and "repudiate" comrades in a situation about which I knew nothing. All on the say-so of two members of the P.C.

I do repudiate! I repudiate the unprincipled conduct of a leadership that resorts to such shameful methods of silencing political opposition by framing up and kicking out people from the party in secret. These so-called trials violate the near 50 years long tradition of Lenin and Trotsky's concept of democratic centralism in the Socialist Workers Party.

The present leadership is embarked upon a changing course in respect to the validity of the permanent revolution, Trotsky's transitional program and "repudiation" of Trotsky himself. The public disavowal of Trotskyism by Barnes in his Y.S.A. speech and then in the first edition of NEW INTERNATIONAL presages a break with the Fourth International.

My appeal stems from the belief that the S.W.P. has not yet (though well on its way) become just another of the many pseudo-Marxist/Leninist parties that now abound. It still is a revolutionary party.

My appeal for reacceptance comes from a willingness to loyally help in a reversal of direction. I don't believe the members will allow the Barnes leadership to continue passing itself off as the party.

Larry Stewart



February 24, 1984

National Committee
Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

Comrades:

In a note of Jan. 31, 1984, I notified you that I wished to appeal my expulsion and that I would send you a detailed appeal. Receipt of this notification was made to me by Rob Cahalane for the SWP National Office on Feb. 14. Here is an account of how I was expelled and my appeal.

On Jan. 2, 1984 I received a phone call from Comrade Louise Goodman, organizer of my branch (Brooklyn), saying it was urgent that she see me the next day on behalf of the Political Committee. We set a time for the afternoon of Jan. 3.

At the appointed time Comrade Goodman arrived accompanied by two others -- Comrade Norton Sandler and a comrade whose face was familiar to me but whose name I do not know. No introduction was made other than that the Political Committee had authorized them as a subcommittee to ask me questions about a matter that had arisen at the state convention in California during a report on Socialist Action.

I replied that I had nothing to do with Socialist Action and did not intend to have anything to do with it; that I had received a copy of it in the mail only that day and had not read it as yet but that it was only to be expected that people expelled from the party would publish something and that they had a right to do so. Comrade Sandler said that while that might be true for those expelled from the party it was a question of the political attitude of people still in the SWP towards Socialist Action. To this I responded that in my opinion they should abide by whatever the party directed on the subject-- if it chose to lay down any such guideline.

I then asked why I had been selected for a visit by the subcommittee or whether all party members were receiving such visits. Comrade Goodman said that not everyone was but only those who, it was thought, had an affinity for the position of the minority delegates at the California convention.

When I asked what made the subcommittee think I had any such "affinity," she responded: "You voted for the Breitman amendment in 1981." I was surprised by this answer and replied that this was absolutely not so. After a moment's silence she resumed by saying she would now describe what had happened in California and began an account of how a statement had been made by a spokesperson for the minority at that convention which the other minority delegates had failed to repudiate and were consequently expelled and how those whom they represented had failed to repudiate that failure to repudiate and had also been expelled; and that now I was being called upon to repudiate the failure, etc.

This complicated account was delivered in a rapid and often indistinct fashion. When I attempted to interrupt with a question, Comrade Goodman asserted: "You can assume that what I am saying is accurate." "How can I assume that," I asked, "when I know what you told me just a minute ago about my voting for the Breitman amendment was false."

I added: "If what happened in California is so crucial, I'm not going to decide on the basis of a hurried, mumbled explanation. Give me something in writing, let me see a transcript of the proceedings there."

The angry reply was: "You'll get no transcript from us!"

"Then you'll get nothing from me," I said, "so you had better leave," and, getting up, I showed them to the door.

Comrade Sandler tried to hand me a previously typed sheet of paper (with my name written in) charging me with disloyalty to the SWP. I refused to accept it and declared: "Look, I'll make a full confession right here and now: I'm a Trotskyist, I still believe in Permanent Revolution and I refuse to regress to the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry." He then tried to leave the paper on a table, but I picked it up, crumpled it into a ball and threw it after them as they went down the front steps. I told them: "If you understand what this purge of the party means you are no longer revolutionists but cynics; if you are unknowing tools you are nonetheless contributing to the degeneration of the party."

Finally, as they made their way down the block towards their parked car, I called out, "You're taking part in a dirty and dishonorable business!"

Trying to look back calmly on the episode I feel regret if I made the three comrades who came to interview me feel that my anger was against them personally and would appreciate it if you would convey that fact to them. I do not think that they displayed any animus towards me nor indicated in any way that they really thought I was disloyal. I think they are well-meaning, devoted comrades who, out of ignorance and the effects of deliberate miseducation about how democratic centralism functions and what past practices in the SWP have been, believed that they were carrying out an unpleasant but necessary task for the advancement of the party.

To explain my conduct let me point out that I became infuriated upon hearing I was under suspicion of disloyalty to the Socialist Workers Party. I have been a member of the American Trotskyist movement uninterruptedly for 48 years -- since 1936, two years before the founding of the SWP. In that time I have been entrusted with posts of responsibility and confidence, among them branch organizer in Boston and Youngstown, member of the National Committee and Political Committee, staff member of the Militant for almost two decades and finally its editor. I declined renomination to the National Committee to allow the election to it of more younger comrades and was quite satisfied to remain an ordinary branch member. Heretofore there had never been a whisper, let alone any charge, against my devotion and loyalty to the party.

Now, I found that all this did not weigh as a feather in the scales but I was being subjected to a shotgun procedure to brand me as disloyal if I failed immediately and without adequate information to condemn some comrades in California for their failure

to disavow an alleged statement of some alleged spokesperson at a state convention about which I knew practically nothing.

This, moreover, was confirmation of what I had already begun to sense -- that I was on some sort of "enemies list" or list of suspects kept by the party leadership and that there probably was a dossier on me. And that as with most dossiers it contained erroneous and false information, such as my alleged voting for the Breitman amendment. (It so happened that I did not participate either on the branch floor or in the Internal Bulletin in the 1981 pre-convention discussion or voting because of ill health and absence from New York.)

But consider for a moment what it signifies for freedom of thought and voting within the party if under the new type of regime we are now witnessing, positions taken in pre-convention discussions are to be used years later as a basis for loyalty investigations.

It is true that in the past two years I have come to hold views critical of those of the leadership. I have been greatly disturbed by the attempt to belittle the importance of Trotsky's contributions to revolutionary theory and practice, particularly to the preparations to jettison the theory of Permanent Revolution. I consider this a form of opportunism embarked upon in the illusory expectation of making the SWP more acceptable and attractive to the leaderships of the Cuban, Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions and a hoped-for new international to be set up by them.

I watched with dismay as legitimate attempts by comrades to voice disagreements with the new line, which was being imposed by the leadership without the sanction of a convention, were squelched and as trials and expulsions of individual comrades -- often with great injustice and on the flimsiest charges -- reached figures exceeding the total of all such trials and expulsions in the party's entire prior history. Despite my critical views I kept silent, not because I wanted to conceal my views but because no opportunity was afforded to express them -- a measure of how different things are under the new type of regime in the party from the way they used to be.

As a loyal and disciplined party member I submitted to all the strictures and multifarious new ordinances against "factional" activity or discussion outside of pre-convention periods. I paid my dues and pledges, increased my pledge on request, contributed to all fund drives and special funds, brought substantial financial contributions from a sympathizer to the National Office and, when asked, signed over my shares in the ownership of the West Street building to Jack Barnes.

I was determined to wait until the opening of the pre-convention discussion period to air my disagreements. To be sure the postponement and unconstitutional cancellation of the convention made me wonder whether a leadership capable of such actions would not "discover" or invent some pretext to purge the party of all suspected and potential critics before allowing a discussion period bulletin. Nonetheless, I persisted in my determination to hold my tongue until one was allowed to speak.

I say that I had already sensed that I was on some sort of list of suspects. I believe that the principal cause of this was that I had maintained close personal friendships with comrades with whom I had long worked in the party and who apparently have been for some time marked out for expulsion -- particularly George Breitman and James Kutcher. But that I was on such a list was confirmed for me by the remarkable run-around I got when I attempted to obtain some personal files at Pathfinder Press. When I had been

editor there and had a small office I kept a file folder of personal correspondence as well as several folders of correspondence containing materials about Trotsky's literary estate. (In 1965 Trotsky's grandson, who had inherited the Old Man's literary estate from Natalia, gave me a power-of-attorney to deal with those commercial publishers in the U.S. who still had contractual rights to books by Trotsky. This required some correspondence and efforts on my part to make them pay up delinquent royalties.)

After I left Pathfinder the file cabinets were moved and after several drastic reductions in Pathfinder's floor space the cabinets and/or their contents were not to be found when I went into the office to consult them. I asked that my folder and those for the Trotsky literary estate be located and given to me to keep at home. After repeated requests Comrade Bruce at Pathfinder found them. But then a hitch developed. He was "too busy" to hand them over to me. I suggested that he or some other comrade there take five or ten minutes to look through the contents of the folders and to take out anything pertaining to Pathfinder that might have wandered into them. But he remained "too busy" and couldn't find anyone else who wasn't "too busy" to do it. It became apparent to me that he was reluctant to assume the responsibility so I suggested that he take the files to the N.O. and have Jack Barnes or Barry Shepard go through them, that they could photocopy anything or everything in them if they wished, but to send me what was properly mine. When I called some days later I was informed that I could not get the file folders because the Political Bureau had discussed my request and had ruled that no documents could be taken out of the building but had to be retained there for "historical purposes."

I then demanded by phone to be allowed to speak to Jack Barnes or Barry Shepard. Repeatedly I was told that they were in meetings and could not be disturbed. I left messages asking that either one of them call me when their meetings were over. I never received a call.

I was unable to attend the Memorial Meeting for Farrell Dobbs in New York so I went to the one held in Boston. Barry Shepard was the principal speaker there. My wife and I had arrived early and Barry came over to me and said that as soon as he got back to New York he would see to it that I got the files I had been seeking for the past six months.

I am still waiting.

** * * * ** * * * *

I hereby formally request the National Committee to reverse the verdict of the Political Committee or Political Bureau on Jan. 4, 1984, expelling me from the Socialist Workers Party for disloyalty. If reinstated in the party I shall continue to support and build it to the best of my ability and I shall also attempt to make my voice heard at the appropriate times to reform the party to a democratic internal regime and to a correct revolutionary Leninist-Trotskyist political line.

With revolutionary greetings,

George Lavan Weissman
George Lavan Weissman

HOW THE OPPOSITION TRIED TO PREVENT A SPLIT

To the Political Committee and the National Committee

New York
March 9, 1983

Dear Comrades:

An abnormal and unhealthy situation exists in the party, only a few weeks before the customary opening by the NC of the 90-day discussion period preceding the next national convention. Action should be taken now to insure a free and democratic preconvention discussion of the type most of us have taken for granted in the SWP in the past.

In the months since the December 1982 NC meeting, there have been a greater number of trials in the party than during any similar time span in the 45-year history of the SWP. Members well known for their dedication and loyalty to the party and the Fourth International have been expelled for alleged violations of discipline which never would have been allowed to go to trial at all in the past, or would have resulted at most in minor penalties. In most cases, the members tried and punished this way are known to be or suspected of being supporters of minority viewpoints. What kind of preconvention discussion can it be if members believe, on the basis of what they observe about these trials, that they may be punished or ostracized or denied certain kinds of party assignments if they express critical views?

These trials and expulsions are symptomatic of a more general problem. A heated factional atmosphere has developed which, in some ways, is more bitter now, before our preconvention discussion has started, than it was at the end of the ideological struggles with the Shachtmanites in 1940 and the Cochranites in 1953. There are rumors of splits and "secret factions," and reports of "fifth columnists" working against the party. There is talk about the need to get rid of "dead wood," i.e., older members, or those who cannot fit into some abstract norm of activity, and are said to be holding back the young activists. The idea is current that an unfavorable decision in the Gelfand suit may force the party underground, despite the obvious fact that a long appeals process would be available. Such reports and rumors are damaging and undermine the possibility of a constructive discussion and convention, a calm and well-considered debate and decision on the disputed questions. All this affects not only those members who identify with minority viewpoints but also those who support the majority. It contributes to the general level of confusion and demoralization, as is demonstrated by the continued high rate of dropouts from the party.

What should be done? We think that the PC and the NC should counteract these negative developments by issuing a statement to the party pledging that the central leadership will clarify and resolve the disputed issues by normal democratic processes -- which means that it will try to maintain the unity of the party and to prevent splits and expulsions, that it will promote loyal collaboration by all tendencies in the daily work of the party during the preconvention discussion period, and that it will establish a numerically small commission on which the NC majority, the Trotskyist Tendency and the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the NC will be represented. Such a commission could discuss and recommend to the PC steps to handle all organizational complaints, grievances, threats, accusations or violations of discipline which may arise out of the discussion.

Such a step could not solve all problems immediately but it should bring an immediate improvement and could lead to further progress in the months before the convention. It would also be in accord with previous practices of the SWP, the Fourth International, and the Comintern in Lenin's time. To demonstrate one such

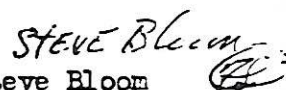
precedent from SWP history, whose results were entirely positive and constructive, we attach four pages from 1939 minutes of the PC, after the start of the fight with the petty-bourgeois opposition led by Shachtman, Burnham and Abern. The "parity commission" set up at that time by the PC at majority initiative did not prevent a split after the 1940 convention, but it helped to postpone the split until an orderly discussion and a fruitful clarification of all the political differences had taken place.

The situation in 1983 is quite different from that of 1939 and we do not recommend any attempts to imitate mechanically what was done in 1939. But we think that the spirit of the 1939 "Joint Statement on Party Unity" was correct and progressive and we urge that the same approach be used now in coping with the problems cited above. We hope that a united statement and proposal can be adopted at the next NC meeting, if not earlier.

We would have preferred to discuss this proposal with the national secretary before submitting it in writing to the NC. We tried to have a discussion of it with Comrade Jack Barnes on February 9 and 10, but he notified us that he could not do so because of the press of work in connection with the coming trial in Los Angeles. In light of the fact that the date of the next NC meeting has not been set yet and that it may be called on less-than-usual advance notice, we believe it is important that the NC members start thinking about the questions raised in this letter as soon as possible.

Comradely,


Frank Lovell



Steve Bloom

Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the NC

Attached to the above letter were copies of four pages of minutes of the Political Committee during the factional fight in the SWP in 1939. Lack of space in this Bulletin prevents us from reproducing all four pages; here we reprint only one of them, which is taken from James P. Cannon's book The Struggle for a Proletarian Party, page 226. It is a resolution introduced by Cannon at the PC meeting of November 7, 1939. The minutes of that meeting show a motion by Cannon to send this document to all party units as a unanimous statement of the PC, endorsed by both the majority and minority groups. It was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote. Cannon and Lewit were elected to the parity commission for the majority group, with Cochran as an alternate, and Burnham and Shachtman were elected to it for the minority, with Abern as alternate. Shachtman and Cannon were elected co-editors of the internal bulletin. The minutes of

November 14, 1939, contain a motion by Cannon: "In order to bring the present discussion to a conclusion by party decision, the (PC) instructs the parity commission to meet at once and recommend a date for a party convention and rules and regulations pertaining thereto." This motion was adopted and the convention was held in April 1940. The PC minutes of December 19, 1939, recorded another example of the parity commission's functions. At this meeting Shachtman asked Albert Goldman, a member of the majority group, if he had told a member that the majority would split the party if it proved to be a minority at the coming convention. Goldman denied this. Cannon moved to instruct the parity commission to investigate the facts and prepare a statement for the PC. This was adopted by the PC.

RESOLUTION ON PARTY UNITY

A Proposal for a Joint Statement to the Party Membership, to be Signed by the Leading Representatives of Both Groups in the P.C.

*Submitted to the Political Committee, November 7, 1939, by
J. P. Cannon for the N.C. Majority.*

In view of the fears expressed by some comrades that the present internal discussion can lead to a split, either as a result of expulsions by a majority or the withdrawal of a minority, the leading representatives of both sides declare:

(1) It is necessary to regulate the discussion in such a way as to eliminate the atmosphere of split and reassure the party members that the unity of the party will be maintained. Toward this end both sides agree to eliminate from the discussion all threats of split or expulsions.

(2) The issues in dispute must be clarified and resolved by normal democratic processes within the framework of the party and the Fourth International. After the necessary period of free discussion, if the two sides cannot come to agreement, the questions in dispute are to be decided by a party convention, without, on the one side, any expulsions because of opinions defended in the pre-convention discussion, or any withdrawals on the other side.

(3) Both sides obligate themselves to loyal collaboration in the daily work of the party during the period of the discussion.

(4) The internal bulletin is to be jointly edited by two editors, one from each side.

(5) A parity commission of four—two from each side—is to be constituted. The function of the parity commission is to investigate all organization complaints, grievances, threats, accusations, or violations of discipline which may arise out of the discussion and report same to the Political Committee with concrete recommendations.

A PHONY HUE AND CRY OVER THE TERM "PUBLIC FACTION"
by George Breitman

It wasn't enough for the SWP leadership to expel more than 10 percent of the party members and to pressure a much larger number of members to resign because they questioned or might question the new policies introduced by the leadership without a membership discussion or party convention. The leadership also finds it necessary to discredit those it expelled, especially the ones who organized themselves after expulsion. Its aim is to inoculate SWP members against contact, communication or discussion with the expellees, in order to prevent them from learning what the expellees really think and advocate.

In February this discrediting campaign reached a new low point when the SWP branches were directed by the leadership not to permit any of the expellees to attend public forums or public meetings run by the SWP. The pretext used was that one of the groups formed by expelled members, Socialist Action, had committed a "provocation" against the party by describing itself as a "public faction of the SWP." Socialist Action did use this term to describe itself twice in November (once in a leaflet on Nov. 12 and another time in an open letter to SWP members on Nov. 18), but we haven't seen it in any Socialist Action literature in the four months since then and cannot say whether they plan to continue using it.

But the new policy of excluding recent expellees from public SWP meetings (which had never been employed in the past except against genuinely disruptive elements) was and is being applied to all recent expellees, including those who are not members of Socialist Action. (See letters from Twin Cities and New York starting on page 25.) The leadership is trying to whip the members into a frenzy against the expellees on the ground that by calling themselves a public faction of the SWP they are endangering the SWP's security and legality. The fact that another group of the expelled, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, has not called itself a public faction of the SWP but is excluded from SWP meetings just the same is conclusive evidence that the leadership's pretext is dishonest. But there are many other proofs of this.

Below we reproduce an article by the SWP leadership in the Dec. 2, 1983, Militant (Exhibit A). It is filled with transparent distortions and clumsy falsifications, but what we want to concentrate on here is the leadership's pretext for inciting the members against the expelled oppositionists. According to this article, if a group of expellees calls itself a public faction of the SWP, that --

- (1) Implies an "organizational connection to the SWP."
- (2) Is a "deliberate challenge" to the rights of SWP members and leaders to "decide party policy," "who speaks and acts in the name of the party," and "who its members are."
- (3) Represents, all together, a "provocation."

(1) But none of the expelled, in either Socialist Action or the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, has ever claimed or asserted any organizational connection to the SWP since their expulsion. On the contrary, they state unmistakably that they were expelled and have appealed for reinstatement -- which not only implies but cannot mean anything except that they are outside the SWP. That is, they say they used to have an organizational connection (membership) but no longer do. How can they honestly be accused of "implying" an organizational connection when they openly protest against the unjust expulsion that terminated their former organizational connection and vehemently demand that they be reinstated in order to restore their former organizational connection?

(2) Once the alleged implication of an organizational connection is seen as the fraud it is, the rest of the leadership's pretext sags to the ground. People who appeal to the party to be reinstated obviously do not and cannot challenge the party's right to decide its policies, who speaks and acts in its name, and who its members are. Isn't it clear that such an appeal implies, assumes and recognizes the right of the party to do all these things?

(3) So where is the alleged "provocation"? If anyone is trying to provoke something, it is the SWP leadership, which seeks through dishonest interpretations and slanders to arouse the members against giving objective consideration to the expelled's appeal for reinstatement.

To understand what the SWP leadership is up to, one must have a clear idea of what the term "public faction" means. Dictionary definitions of the two words are insufficient; you also have to know how the term has been used historically in and by our movement.

A faction, as Lenin defined it in 1911, when the Bolsheviks were still a faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, "is an organization within a party, united ... by a particular platform of views on party questions" (Collected Works, vol. 17, p. 265, emphasis added). A public faction, then, is an organization outside a party, united by a particular platform of views on party questions. It comes into existence when there is a split in a party, either because a group withdraws or is expelled from it. Let us give some examples.

In 1928 the American CP expelled the leaders of one of its factions (Cannon, Abern and Shachtman) as "Trotskyists." They immediately organized themselves as a group outside of the CP to fight for the reform of the CP and the Comintern and for their own reinstatement. The term "public faction" had not yet been invented in 1928, but that was precisely what the new group represented in relation to the party from which its members had been expelled. They called themselves a faction of the CP and Comintern and took the temporary name of the "Opposition Group in the Workers (Communist) Party of America." They retained that name until their first national conference in May 1929, where they became the Communist League of America.

Up to now, the present leadership of the SWP has never questioned the legitimacy or validity of this course by the founders of American Trotskyism. The Stalinists of course denied that the Trotskyists were a faction of anything but the imperialist bourgeoisie, but our movement has always considered their course principled and correct. As recently as 1981, the SWP leadership published a collection of Cannon's writings and speeches, The Left Opposition in the U.S., 1928-31, with an introduction that describes the Left Opposition as an "expelled faction" of the CP.

But the logic of the present SWP leadership's attack on the term "public faction" raises a question: Were the founders of American Trotskyism engaging in a "provocation" when they called themselves an expelled faction of the CP or the Opposition Group in the CP? Were they challenging the right of the CP to decide its own policies, membership, etc.? SWP members have the right to know if their leadership has changed its position on this issue, as it has done on so many others. If it hasn't changed its position, if it still thinks the founders of our movement were justified in functioning for five years as an expelled faction of the CP, then it owes the members an explanation for its current misrepresentation of the meaning of "public faction."

A second example: in 1953 there was a split in the Fourth International, resulting in two international groups -- those organized around the International Committee, which was headed by SWP leaders, and those who supported the International Secretariat. For the next ten years, until they reunited in 1963, the two groups, or factions, functioned as separate public entities, with their own literature, meetings, etc. The present leadership of the SWP had not yet joined the SWP at the time of the split but they have always referred to the International Committee as a public faction of the Fourth International.

Do they now consider the formation of the International Committee as a "provocation," a threat to the security and legality of the FI, etc.? If so, they should say so openly. If not, they owe it to the members to explain why their position on that is in such sharp contradiction to the implications of their present position on "public faction."

A final example: In July 1982 there was a split in the Revolutionary Communist League, Israeli section of the FI, resulting in the formation of a group that called itself Revolutionary Communist League (Turn). The latter was allied factionally with the leadership of the American SWP. In November 1982 the Militant and Inter-continental Press printed articles from Israel with an introduction that called the RCL (Turn) "one of the two organizations in Israel affiliated to the Fourth International." On reading this, the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the FI wrote a letter asking that the introductory statement be corrected because the FI "only recognizes one organization in Israel, its section, the RCL. No other organization is affiliated to the Fourth International in Israel."

On Dec. 16, 1982, the SWP's Political Committee met and voted 13 to 1 to send an already drafted reply to the Bureau's letter. Signed by Mary-Alice Waters for the PC, this letter is reproduced below as Exhibit B. As the second paragraph indicates, the PC suggested that RCL (Turn) could be called "a public faction of the Israeli section of the Fourth International."

This was less than one year before the SWP leadership started using "public faction" in an entirely different way than it had ever been used in our movement. The term was perfectly acceptable to the SWP leadership and even advocated by it in December 1982 but it was a "provocation" in December 1983.

SWP members should ask for an end to this kind of factional crookedness, which only discredits the SWP in the eyes of honest workers. They should give objective consideration to the appeals for reinstatement by the expelled members. They should support the reinstatement of members expelled solely because they defended the program and traditions the SWP and the FI have fought for since their inception. All such steps are in the best interests of the SWP itself.

Exhibit A

SWP condemns misuse of its name

At its November 16-20 meeting, the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party acted to protect the party against a provocation from an organization called Socialist Action. This sect has been established by a small grouping that recently split from the SWP.

Socialist Action publicly announced its existence at the November 12 solidarity demonstrations by distributing a leaflet attacking the leadership of the overthrown workers and farmers government of Gre-

nada, headed by Maurice Bishop, and denouncing the SWP.

Socialist Action falsely presents itself as a "public faction of the SWP," implying some organizational connection to the SWP. This lie constitutes a deliberate challenge to the right of the party membership and elected leadership bodies to decide party policy, which includes first and foremost the right to determine who speaks and acts in the name of the party, and who the members of the party are.

The National Committee (unanimously) adopted a resolution reaffirming the basic principle of the party's right to determine its policies free from interference by hostile groups, and protecting the organizational and legal integrity of the SWP.

The resolution states that. "The SWP has no 'public faction,' and adherence to or collaboration with any such formation is incompatible with membership in the SWP.

"No bodies other than the constitutionally elected leadership bodies of the SWP can speak in the name of the party. The SWP takes no political, organizational, or legal responsibility for statements or actions of any other organization."

Socialist Workers Party

14 Charles Lane, New York, NY 10014 • 212/242-5530

December 16, 1982

United Secretariat Bureau

Dear Comrades,

Your letter of November 30 to the SWP Political Bureau raises important matters that must be placed on the agenda of an upcoming meeting of the United Secretariat.

Your letter asserts that it was a "serious error" for the Militant to refer in an editorial introduction to the RCL (Turn) as "one of the two organizations in Israel affiliated to the Fourth International." The editors inform us that their intention was simply to identify the comrade mentioned in the article. Perhaps a better formulation would have been "a public faction of the Israeli section of the Fourth International." We, of course, are willing to work out a better way of identifying the RCL (Turn) in our press.

But any objective reading of your November 30 letter and suggested "correction," makes clear that a much more important question is involved -- the Bureau's effort to read the members of the RCL (Turn) out of the Fourth International. We reject this assertion.

The Bureau proposes a public declaration to this effect before a discussion on the split has been held by the United Secretariat and before a representative United Secretariat commission has been sent to Israel to meet with all Fourth Internationalists involved on both sides of the split. This is a break from the norms of responsible and authoritative leadership followed by our world movement since reunification.

This procedure, whereby the Bureau announces who is and who is not part of the Fourth International without any decision by the United Secretariat, is totally unprecedented in our world movement, even at the height of the factional situation of the early 1970s. For our part, the SWP Political Committee particularly remembers the decision -- without even prior consultation with the SWP's fraternal members of the United Secretariat -- to invite representatives of the Internationalist Tendency to participate in the United Secretariat meeting following the IT's split from the SWP in 1974. There are many other examples.

We request that the question of the split in Israel be placed on the agenda of an upcoming United Secretariat meeting and that leaders of both the RCL and RCL (Turn) be present to participate in the discussion. We also request that any documents or other information from the RCL and RCL (Turn) be translated and made available to United Secretariat members for this discussion.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters
for the SWP Political Committee

cc: RCL
RCL (Turn)

The SWP's New Policy of Exclusion

January 30, 1984

Twin Cities — SWP Expelled Members Branch

To the Members and Supporters of the Twin Cities Branch, Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

At the January 29 Andrea Morell MILITANT Forum, Twin Cities Branch Organizer Bill Arth barred three expelled comrades -- Gayle Swann, Christine Frank Onasch and Bill Onasch -- from entering the headquarters. Comrade Arth would only say that the Party had decided to exclude these comrades. No reasons were given for this exclusion nor any indication of who else may now be persona non grata.

This is a serious departure from the traditions of the MILITANT Forum. Throughout the Forum's long history the only persons barred were those with a history of disrupting meetings -- Nazis, Workers League, etc. Members of bitter opponents of the SWP -- such as the Communist Party, SLP, social democrats, Morenoists, to name a few -- have frequently attended Forums unmolested. The Forum has prided itself as a genuine center of education, discussion and debate for the entire workers movement.

The expelled comrades certainly had no intention of disrupting the Forum nor could there have been any reasonable fear of disruption on the part of the Party leadership. This is another move to try to quarantine the Party and its periphery from any contact with us, to try to brand us as being in the same category as fascists and Healyites.

This kind of dead-end factionalism will inevitably damage the hard-won reputation of the Forum and other public Party institutions. It is a further retreat from principled methods of political struggle and a dangerous adaptation to the kind of slanderous conduct that Trotskyists have faced from other currents in the workers movement.

The day after our expulsion we wrote the Twin Cities Executive Committee requesting that we be allowed to work on some basic party-building activities such as Forums, MILITANT sales, the election campaign and PRDF. The EC has not even acknowledged receipt of our letter. Now we are deprived from even attending public events of the Party.

Despite this new drive to ostracize us we remain loyal to the SWP. We have urged all those that we have explained our expulsion to to remain supporters of the Party. We have engaged in no public attacks on the SWP and do not plan to.

We seek to present our real views to the members and supporters of the SWP and Fourth International while pursuing our fight for reinstatement into the Party. We call on you to remain loyal builders of the Party but to speak out against the purge methods and ostracism being substituted for debate with honest worker-Bolsheviks.

Comradely,

Minnesota Socialist Workers Expelled Branch

Bill Onasch; Christine Frank Onasch; Dave Riehle; Gayle Swann; Bill Peterson;
Melanie Benson; Ralph Schwartz

N.Y., N.Y.

February 25, 1984

Manhattan Branch, SWP
and N.Y.- N.J. District Committee, SWP

Dear Comrades:

I write to you in indignation and sorrow to tell you that I was excluded from the Militant Labor Forum at 79 Leonard St. on Thursday night, February 23rd.

On February 10th I had attended the forum to hear Bill Gottlieb's talk on the Soviet economy. Some party members greeted me, others pretended they did not see me. I sat through the forum. Nothing I did could possibly be construed as disruptive. I did not even ask for the floor during the discussion period.

When I left the hall, I was approached by NC member Dick McBride who said, "Dorothy, we want you to tell your people that starting next week you will be excluded from attending our forums because of the provocative actions of Socialist Action. Next time we'll have a defense guard to prevent your entering. O.K.?" I said it certainly was not OK to be barred from a public meeting. I might have added: "Why should you exclude anyone who does not act improperly from the forum?"

Furthermore, as I told McBride, I am not a member of Socialist Action, and am not responsible for or to it. I think its members have the same right as other political tendencies to attend public forums so long as they act in an orderly and non-disruptive way (and as far as I know they have never acted in any other way at forums). But why should I, a non-member, be discriminated against on the basis of whatever they do or don't do? (I am a member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a group of comrades expelled from the SWP who are seeking their reinstatement, and I am a supporter of the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism.)

On Thursday, February 23rd I returned to the forum to verify McBride's to me unbelievable statement that those expelled from the SWP would now not even be allowed to attend public forums. This time I was actually barred from going in to the forum and was threatened with physical action to remove me if I didn't leave on my own.

In fifty years in our movement I can remember only one other personal episode as distressing as this. That occurred at a Stalinist meeting in Newark where we were trying to distribute our literature, and their people assaulted us, grabbing our leaflets and tearing them up. This was in 1937 and I did not feel sorrow then--only indignation and disbelief.

My sorrow now is for the 50 years I have spent building a revolutionary socialist movement to challenge bureaucratic organizational methods, only to find them being used by my own party!

Even more grievous for me is the fact that you are hurting the party by this new policy. When word gets around that you are excluding people from public meetings, not because of their conduct but because of their political positions, the prestige of the party will be damaged in the eyes of all workers sympathetic to proletarian democracy. Groups that refuse to politically answer their opponents and rely on organizational measures to avoid giving such answers tend to become discredited, and that is what your new policy will end in accomplishing.


Throughout its 55-year history our party's policy and practice on public meetings has been to admit members of any and all tendencies that came to our public functions to discuss and not to disrupt, whether they were Stalinists, Social Democrats, anarchists, nationalists, pacifists, reformists, ultraleftists, etc. After the Shachtmanite split in 1940, the same policy was extended to them. After the Cochranite split in 1953, the same policy was continued. Why is it being changed now to exclude former members who have appealed their expulsions and want to be in the party on the same basis as other members?

Our party always wanted to discuss with the Stalinists. They were the ones who tore up our leaflets, beat us up, threw our members out of their public meetings, and tried to justify this on the false ground that we were enemies of the working class. But the real reason was they were afraid to allow discussion between us and their members. What is your reason for wanting to quarantine party members from all contact with us?

I urge you: In the interests of the party above everything else, draw back from these anti-Leninist, anti-Trotskyist methods. The party's enemies are the imperialists, the bourgeoisie, the reformists, those who keep the workers tied to the Democratic Party. Its enemies do not include those of us who consider the SWP the only revolutionary party in this country, and want to be members of it, and ask only that they have the right to discuss their views inside the party in accord with the party's traditional rules. Don't turn your back on fellow revolutionaries or try to prejudice party members against them.

Pull back from methods our enemies have used against our party. Restore the norms established by Cannon that have been our norms for decades. Don't be so afraid of discussing political ideas with people who disagree with you or don't agree with you completely. Know who your friends and enemies are--or you will never be able to assume leadership of the working class vanguard. Rescind or reverse the new policy on attendance at forums, and do it right away, before the prestige of the party is further damaged unnecessarily.

Comradely,


Dorothea Breitman

A Life We Can Learn From: Carl Skoglund (1884-1960)
by David Riehle

"Carl was one of the old guard, one of the founders of our movement, thirty-two years ago. And before that he was one of the founders of the Communist Party in 1919. And before that, he was active in the Socialist Party in this country since the day he illegally set foot on our sacred soil. He was even a socialist before that, in Sweden . . ." -- James P. Cannon, Jan. 7, 1961

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Carl Skoglund in Bengtsfors, Sweden. It is also 50 years since the great Minneapolis Teamster strikes. Skoglund, along with his close friend and comrade Vincent R. Dunne, was a central leader of the strikes.

"Skogie," as he was widely known, was an exceptional individual who made a deep and lasting impact on those with whom he associated. Several years ago his friends and comrades proposed that a commemoration of his life be organized in 1984. They also proposed that research be conducted to provide more information about his early life.

Not a great deal was known about Skoglund's life before 1928 when he, along with V. R. Dunne and 19 other members of the Minneapolis branch of the Communist Party, was expelled for refusing to vote for the expulsion of James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern. In October 1928 Cannon, Shachtman and Abern had declared their support for the Russian Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky and had been summarily expelled.

Following the expulsion of these three CP leaders, meetings were called throughout the party to demand ratification of the action. All those who voted against were also expelled.

Skoglund and Dunne had been members of the Minnesota District Committee of the party since 1921. District 9, which was the Minnesota district, was the third largest in the party.

As more has come to light about Skoglund's life, it is evident that the respect and admiration among those who knew him has persisted since his death in 1960. This high regard was not based simply on his friendly personality and well known commitment and competence as a trade union leader and loyal party builder. These undeniable characteristics, it became increasingly clear, were manifestations of a more profound contribution Carl made to maintaining the continuity of the revolutionary socialist movement.

In reviewing Skoglund's life it becomes easier to understand and explain the unique nature of the Socialist Workers Party, the party he helped to build.

At the time this commemoration was suggested, the SWP had a record of 50 years of unbroken continuity. It had been able to survive in the most powerful imperialist country in the world without being vitiated by opportunism or ossifying into a sect. It not only persisted, it renewed itself through intervention in the class struggle, successfully maneuvered through fusions and splits, and proved capable of assessing new developments in the world and orienting to them correctly.

Carl Skoglund embodied the worker-Bolshevik who must make up the brain and sinew of a Leninist party. It is not possible to adequately report this rich and varied life in a biography of a few pages. It is only possible to index some of the most important aspects of it. Even this will demonstrate that his life was a consistent and conscious application of Marxist understanding to the task of constructing a proletarian revolutionary party in the United States.

The class struggle continuity and experience of the proletarian cadre that gave the SWP its historic vitality and political trajectory was expressed through Carl Skoglund and a few others of his generation, those Cannon called the old guard. They transmitted their proletarian characteristics to a degree not adequately appreciated today. The real value of a commemoration of Skoglund's life is an enriched understanding of how he lived it and what it can teach for the future.

He came to the United States in 1911 already an experienced and politically educated Marxist worker. His growth and work in Sweden deserve a chapter in themselves, and cannot be dealt with here.

Skoglund attempted here in this country, first as an individual and later as part of an organized political tendency, to assemble an educated proletarian cadre that could construct a revolutionary party. He did this through his participation in the political and trade union life of the working class in Minneapolis.

Skoglund's political activity in the U.S. began in 1914 when he joined the Scandinavian Socialist Federation, the Swedish-language affiliate of the American Socialist Party. This was an important component of the SP, especially in Minnesota.

The Scandinavians were active in the English-language bodies of the SP as well as in their own federation. The Minnesota SP's candidate for governor in 1916 was a member of the SSF. Skoglund served on the party Central Committee in Hennepin County (Minneapolis) during this period, as well as being active in the SSF.

Skoglund was also a member of the IWW where he tried to win over worker militants to the class struggle left wing of the SP. This is where he met Vincent Dunne, who credited Skogie with winning him to Marxism. (Later Farrell Dobbs also said Carl was his first teacher in the movement.)

In the years before U.S. entry into World War I his main activity was in the Scandinavian Federation. This organization had 13 branches and over 1,000 members in Minnesota. In 1917 Skoglund was elected state chairman.

His only known written contribution to our party was a letter to The Militant in 1929. But we now know that Carl Skoglund was a frequent contributor to Svenska Socialisten, the national organ of the SSF, and to its successor after the formation of the Communist Party. So far 25 articles by Skoglund have been found. In these he displays a delightful sense of humour, while persistently campaigning for a party made up of active cadre rather than a loose electoral formation. In an article written in 1916 he explains the need for party members to educate themselves in the materialist conception of history and the labor theory of value, and to be active propagandists for the party. "That man or woman

who sells a book or pamphlet, or gets a subscription to our paper," he wrote, "does more for the socialist movement than one who votes for the ticket from top to bottom."

Skoglund was hired as a mechanic by the Pullman Company in Minneapolis in 1916, and in 1917 he helped organize Local 299 of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen. He served as its first president. Later he was a central leader of the 1922 railroad shopcraft strike, a six month struggle conducted nation-wide. The strike was ultimately defeated, and Skoglund was blacklisted.

While working in the rail yards in Minneapolis he met Oscar Coover, an electrician who later became one of the founders of the Trotskyist movement in 1928. During the 1922 strike Carl met two railroad engineers, C. F. and P. G. Hedlund, who were later among the 21 expelled members of the CP in 1928.

After the shopcraft strike was lost Skoglund worked at odd jobs until 1929, although he continued to represent Local 299 in the Minneapolis Trades and Labor Assembly, the AFL central labor body, until 1925.

In early 1925 around 20 delegates to the Assembly, who were members of the CP, were expelled by the conservatives as part of a national purge. Carl was one of the expellees.

In 1929 he and several other comrades in the Trotskyist movement bought some old trucks and went into business hauling coal. It was from this position, not even directly employed as wage workers, that they began their work that would launch an organizing drive and culminate in the great Teamster strikes of 1934.

Skoglund, more than anyone else, was responsible for formulating the general strategy used in the strikes. This had been discussed and tested, insofar as it was possible, as far back as the mid-twenties when Skoglund was trade union director for the CP in Minneapolis. His contributions incorporated other experience and lessons of union struggle, including the conception of a broad based strike committee as a means of flanking the official leadership. This had been used in the 1922 strike.

While he was still in the CP the trade union fractions that Skoglund influenced and led rejected the ultraleft conception that it was possible to bypass the existing AFL unions and proceed directly to the construction of militant "revolutionary" unions. This idea had been introduced in the CP even before 1928.

It was their rejection of this false idea that allowed the expelled CP members to mobilize the drivers and their allies in 1934 through the Teamsters Union, an AFL craft union, and to force the conservative leadership of the local central labor union to give support to the strike.

In the period immediately after the Russian revolution, Skoglund was a leader of the SP Left Wing which responded to the revolution and tried to transform the SP into a Bolshevik-type organization. He was one of seven delegates elected from Minnesota to attend the famous Chicago convention of the SP in August 1919. That convention culminated in a split and the formation, initially, of two communist parties, the Communist

Labor Party and the Communist Party of America. Skoglund chaired the meeting of the Minneapolis SP following that convention that voted, on his motion, to affiliate with the CPA.

As a member of the CP Skoglund was an active participant in the factional struggles conducted primarily through the Foster-Cannon faction and later the Cannon faction against the petty-bourgeois Lovestone leadership. The central concept animating this struggle was the need to construct a genuine proletarian party, with a leadership that understood and reflected worker needs in the party. They fought to break down the isolation of the party from the mainstream of American industrial workers, and against its intermittently ultraleft and opportunist policies, especially in the trade union movement.

The pioneer Trotskyist cadre had common experiences in the factional struggle in the CP, the union movement, and even the pre-1919 SP. Many had in fact worked together in the Scandinavian Socialist movement, including Arne Swabeck who was a national leader of the SSF.

The core of the Minneapolis Trotskyists had been personally recruited by Skoglund to revolutionary socialist activity, and to a definite set of ideas as applied to the party and the union movement.

In this sense the adherence of the Minneapolis Communists to the Trotskyist movement in 1928 represented not simply the recruitment of a group, but the fusion of a proletarian current with the Cannon-Swabeck tendency. Skoglund himself was not a member of the Cannon faction in the CP, although he generally had agreement with it.

The combination of these two currents represented the fusion of the best of the proletarian militants in the CP, those who were the most conscious and deliberate about where they were going and what needed to be done. It was their characteristics that gave the SWP its stability, maturity and genuine proletarian leadership.

This original vanguard nucleus, distilled out of the class struggle, represented the objective maturity of the American working class at that time. The task of revolutionaries in this country in our time is the fusion of this current and this tradition with the new wave of proletarian militants that will inevitably emerge from the present crisis of the capitalist system.

Carl Skoglund never served as a full time functionary for the Communist League of America, or the Workers Party of America, or the SWP. He never gave a report at a party convention. Yet he contributed mightily to the political direction of the party. As a constant and direct participant in the class struggle at the trade union level — as a militant, an organizer, an educator, a strike leader, and as president of Teamster Local 544 — he provided the indispensable complement to the more directly political leaders in the center, and a verification of its general policies.

There is plenty of evidence for this that cannot be presented in this space. But a necessary part of preparing the future will be the dissemination of this historical capital to the cadres of the Fourth International in the U.S., and to all the sections of the International. A commemoration of Carl Skoglund's life in this centennial year of his birth can be a step in that direction.

Toward an Understanding of Working Class Radicalization
by Frank Lovell

The first question is what happened to the mass radicalization.

Since the 1960s much has been said and written about "the new mass radicalization," comparing it to the labor resurgence of the 1930s that gave rise to the CIO movement and to earlier periods of social unrest.

In 1969 the twenty-third national convention of the Socialist Workers Party adopted a resolution, "The Course of U.S. Imperialism and the Revolutionary Struggle for a Socialist America," which noted that at the beginning of the decade a new wave of radicalization had emerged. That was 15 years ago. Every year since then, until the most recent period, the leadership of the party has tended to talk about this radicalization as if it were a more or less continuous process.

At the party's 1970 educational conference in Oberlin, Ohio, a series of talks related the growing radicalization to the women's liberation movement, the rise of Black nationalism, the Chicano independence struggles, student protests, and the anti-war movement. One of these talks, given by George Breitman, compared and contrasted the radicalism of that time to those of the past. Breitman cautioned against the mistaken notion that mass radicalization at any time is the same as a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation. He also cautioned against leaping to conclusions about a working class radicalization. "The truth is that we don't have many ways of assessing the process until it is near to maturity," he said.

During the next five years, leading to the 1975 convention of the SWP, the party leadership became convinced that the deepening radicalization was leading to a new resurgence of the working class. This was predicated on the 1974-75 depression in the U.S. and the world crisis of the capitalist system. Nixon had imposed a wage-freeze in 1971. The union movement came under attack, unemployment rose, class antagonisms sharpened. The war in Vietnam intensified, and ended in defeat for the U.S. "There is a continuity in our analysis from 1969 to 1975 that should be studied and discussed," said Jack Barnes in his report to the May plenum of the SWP national committee which he titled "The Radicalization of the American Working Class."

This was a report on the draft resolution for the 1975 convention, "Prospects for Socialism in America" (published in 1976 as part of a collection of reports and related resolutions under the same title). This resolution motivated the party's "turn to the working class," charted "labor's strategic line of march," and projected "the conditions for victory" of the socialist revolution. Related resolutions and reports declared that "the radicalization has reached a qualitatively new point in terms of the consciousness of the working class," and introduced "the perspective of cutting down the size of some of the larger branches, so that members can be released to do pioneering in new areas -- both in their cities and elsewhere."

The experiment with small branches that were expected to divide and multiply failed, the result of misjudging the extent, depth, and popular expressions of the radicalization at the time. Young people in the Black, Chicano, and white working class neighborhoods who might be developing radical responses to the conditions of their lives were not on that account prepared to join the SWP. The branches were forced to regroup in order to maintain a political presence in major cities where the party had been established since

its founding in 1938. Newly established branches in cities where the SWP had not previously existed were reinforced and survived.

In 1978, at the February plenum of the NC, the central leadership recommended a general turn to basic industry, henceforth known within the party as "the turn." This decision was prompted by the fact that dominant sectors of the ruling class had indicated in union contract negotiations and in other ways that the kind of union-management collaboration in basic industry that had prevailed for 30 years was finished. The employers had adopted a new, tougher, anti-union labor relations policy.

This did not mean as some SWP leaders seemed to think that the working class would become immediately more combative, or force the union bureaucracy to stand up to the employer attacks, or that the political campaigns of the SWP would be embraced by masses of radicalizing workers. None of this happened. What did happen was a series of hard fought strikes in which the employer offensive was checked temporarily and tested.

At the World Congress of the Fourth International in 1979 SWP national secretary Jack Barnes exhorted his European co-thinkers and others to "make the turn" to basic industry. "It is there that we will meet the forces to build the Fourth International, to build workers' parties. It is there that we will meet the young workers, the growing numbers of women workers, the workers of oppressed nationalities, the immigrant workers," he said. "It is inside the industrial working class that revolutionary parties will get a response to our program and recruits to our movement." All this is true, but not directly related to the stage of working class radicalization in the U.S. or elsewhere. Barnes contended, however, that "a political radicalization of the working class -- uneven and at different tempos from country to country -- is on the agenda."

The main political resolution adopted at the SWP's 30th national convention that year, in August 1979, titled "Building a Revolutionary Party of Socialist Workers," confirmed "the turn." As then interpreted by the authors this resolution meant (in terms of where party members would be required to work and the kinds of work they would do) that "former lawyers, doctors, dentists, professors, members of the building trades, teachers, and all varieties of public employees . . . are either already in industry or looking . . . " Implicit in all this is the belief that working class radicalization must be first expressed in the struggles of workers in basic industry, and then only through the industrial unions. From such a schematic concept it was easy (seemingly inherent in the schema) to conclude that "the working class is moving to center stage," later to become an over-worked expression in the party.

By the time of the 1980 SWP educational conference at Oberlin the party leaders had dropped much of the talk about working class radicalization in this country. Their main attention had shifted to "the revolutionary leadership in Cuba, and the development of new Marxist currents such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the New Jewel Movement in Grenada." This coincided with some lost strikes and the general stepped-up anti-labor offensive of the employers. The presidential election campaign failed to spark new political interest within the working class, and it was then conceded on all sides that the anti-labor candidate Reagan might win the election.

In preparation for the 1981 national convention the SWP leadership was engrossed in the revolutionary developments in Latin America and in its new political turn in that direction. This new turn was an adaptation to the Castroist political current, a turn away from Trotskyism, and a quiet purge

of the National Committee to eliminate potential opposition there when the full sweep of the new turn became known. Consequently there was little talk at the convention about the working class radicalization. Meetings of the industrial fractions debated their own internal organizational problems, oblivious to any problems in the union movement.

This writer submitted a series of articles in pre-convention discussion on the state of the unions, the existing level of working class radicalization, and the potential for SWP recruitment on the job and in the unions. These questions at that time were far removed from the attention of the party leadership, and were ignored.

Except for the SWP there has not been much effort since the end of the war in Vietnam to analyze and explain working class radicalization. The Stalinists and some circles among the Social Democrats talk and write about union politics, assuming that the working class will radicalize. But they have said little about the radicalizing process. Most radicals are content to deplore the "lack of militancy" and the "political backwardness" of workers and their allies in this country. The common questions are "How can Reagan get away with the things he does?" and "Why don't the unions fight back?" If seriously pursued these might be useful questions. Usually they are purely rhetorical.

Some radicals say the 1960s radicalization was never transmitted to any broad stratum of the working class, and certainly not to the unionized workers. It is, moreover, generally accepted in the radical movement that some ingredients of the 1960s protests were alien to working class needs. Who needs the "new left" today when modern Marxists are trying to emulate the old left? What good is "participatory democracy" in a union caucus? Why organize demonstrations to lobby capitalist politicians when a new mass party of the working class is urgently needed? These and similar questions are bandied about in the SWP, but never openly raised or seriously discussed.

SWP leaders, who might be expected to respond, have lost interest in the radicalization of the 1960s and in trying to trace its effect on the present generation of young Blacks, women, and others in the working class and in the unions. An article in the Militant of March 9 about a meeting of the party's national steel fraction mentions "a sober assessment of the state of thinking and radicalization among rank-and-file steelworkers." It quotes Geoff Mirelowitz, reporter for the SWP political committee, who "explained" that the dissatisfaction and anger of steelworkers "is not the same as thinking in class terms." Mirelowitz said, "we see no motion yet towards the development of a class-struggle leadership prepared to organize the necessary battle against the employers and their government." He said, "the overwhelming mass of steelworkers do not yet see any alternative to the pro-capitalist policies of the officialdom." It is no surprise then that "there is no layer of workers moving consciously to revolutionary conclusions and ready, in significant numbers, to join a revolutionary organization like the SWP." The fact is obvious. But the conception is false. This is not an assessment of the radicalization among steelworkers.

The fallacy here is in identifying radicalization with class warfare. They are not the same. Mass radicalization is a condition of changing attitudes, shifting beliefs, rejecting previously accepted values. It is the subjective responses to social crises.

The class struggle and class warfare continue under all circumstances in capi-

talist society. When the class struggle is muted on the industrial front, as in the 1950s, it breaks out in different forms on other fronts. The Montgomery bus boycott began in 1955, a form of class struggle. This was also an expression of radicalization among Blacks in the South, a new determination on their part to defy Jim Crow. But failure to distinguish between radicalization and class warfare, as in this instance, is misleading. The two are not the same, and not always part of the same process. Understanding this distinction is necessary in the basic work of building a revolutionary party, and in helping to build a class-struggle left wing in the labor movement.

The present circumstances of the unions are drastically altered from those of 30 years ago, the result of the recent drive by the employers to take back concessions previously granted. This has sharpened the class struggle and provoked some long and bitter strikes. It has not, in and of itself, contributed much to the further radicalization of the working class.

Working class radicalization is fueled by persistently high unemployment, technological changes in industrial production, the uncertainty of job replacement, lower wage rates, fear of inflation, government cut-backs of entitlement programs, high military spending, lack of educational opportunities — in short, the same economic insecurity and social unrest that prompts militant strike actions and strike-support demonstrations. But the level of radicalization is measured by the rejection of old values, the questioning of constituted authority, the search for new methods and new standards of social behavior, the desire for a complete change to something better.

This sense of insecurity and desire for change is not confined to the working class, and certainly not the poverty stricken who have never known security and have always wanted change. The middle class and some sectors of the working class — especially those industrial workers who have long enjoyed union protection and think they are "middle class" — are more unsettled at this juncture than most workers who are still trying to figure out what happened to the economy and what the promised economic recovery will bring. This does not mean that the thoughtful worker is less susceptible to a Marxist explanation of the social crisis than others who may seem more radical.

Signs of mass radicalization show up in capitalist electoral politics. In the Democratic primaries this year many voters who question the two-party system and seek something better crossed party lines in 1980 to vote for Reagan and are now supporting Hart because he promises to scrap old practices and introduce new methods. In a more severe economic and social crisis, when the ruling class begins to think that fascism can save their system from total collapse, the radicalized middle-class elements can become the shock troops of the "new movement," as happened in Germany. In pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations the masses are radicalized and in their overwhelming majority can swing either to the side of the proletarian revolution or to the side of reaction. The outcome is determined by the will and ability of the working class leadership to constitute a new government, not by the general radicalization of masses of people of all classes.

The radicalization of the 1960s exerted considerable influence upon working class youth who were part of it, and through them its residue remains

in the ranks of the unions today. This radicalizing process never ended. Unlike the class struggle it could have wound down and disappeared. Past periods of radicalization have ended rather abruptly. World War I ended the radicalization of what has been called the Debsian period which began around the time the Socialist Party was organized in 1901. The radicalization of the 1930s ended suddenly with the advent of World War II. The radicalization of the 1960s was slowed down for awhile after the war in Vietnam, and it changed course toward the end of the 1970s. Large segments of the working class began to radicalize during that decade. Millions of workers have been and are directly affected by the economic instability. Reports of the dissatisfaction and anger of steelworkers are accurate enough, and this dissatisfaction and anger is one of the signs of the present working class radicalization. These workers in this country are also influenced in their thinking by the revolutionary struggles of colonial peoples in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. The uprising in Poland likewise contributes to the general sense of rebellion against authority and injustice which is felt throughout the working class.

Black workers and women are more radicalized by the conditions of their lives in recent years than other sectors of the working class, partly because of their expectations. They believe that the organized struggles of Blacks and women are viable, and they tend to reject the old idea that somehow things will get better by themselves. It is as if they were wedded to the idea of protest and struggle. They believe in "upward mobility" with a different understanding and interpretation than the phrase connoted when it was coined. They insist upon change. They seek ways to bring change about. These are the expressions of a radicalizing sector of the working class.

In a recent series of talks in Minneapolis on the state of the unions, rank-and-file control, strike strategy, the importance of independent political action, and related subjects, I expressed the opinion that even though the future of the unions appears bleak there is renewed radicalization in the ranks. I have since concluded that this opinion needs clarification and amplification. That is what accounts for this contribution to further discussion of the question. We ought to make some corrections in what has been said in the political resolutions and reports of the SWP during the past decade -- beginning with the so-called turn to the working class in 1975 -- to clearly distinguish between mass radicalization and organized actions by segments of the working class. If we can safely say that "there is no layer of workers moving consciously to revolutionary conclusions," it does not therefore follow that there is no working class radicalization. It adds nothing to our understanding of this process to be told that "the situation remains a preparatory one."

The signs of radicalization do not include daily mass actions, nor the emergence of a ready-made "class-struggle left wing" in the unions. Anti-war demonstrations such as those last November 12 in Washington, D.C., and other cities, and the nearly half-million who demonstrated in Washington on August 27 for jobs, peace, and freedom are signs of genuine radicalization. How this will be expressed in the unions depends upon how and by whom it is organized. A left wing in the unions is not a spontaneous development, any more than strikes and strike-support actions are spontaneous. They have to be organized. The radicalization prepares the ground for the success of such actions, but they do not occur automatically out of the radicalizing process.

Democracy in Today's Revolutions
by Adam Shils

DISCUSSION ARTICLE

Every year the Guardian, one of the main radical papers in this country, has an editorial summarizing the state of the left at year's end. This year the editorial observed that, "Any left survey of 1983 must also point out the devastating, primarily self-inflicted wounds suffered by several liberation forces as they confronted imperialism. The murder of Maurice Bishop, the civil war of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the bloody struggle within one of the Salvadoran guerilla groups all underscore the inescapable necessity of political unity. These tragedies require careful investigation by activists in order that they not be repeated elsewhere" ("A Year of Living Dangerously," December 28, 1983, p. 18).

This issue of the Bulletin IDOM is reprinting several articles which have appeared as part of the investigation and discussion suggested by the Guardian. Adolfo Gilly wrote his moving piece, "The death of Comrade Marcial," when the news of the deaths of Comandante Ana Maria and Marcial of the Salvadoran FPL first became known. At that time the FMLN stated that Marcial was driven to suicide by the murder of Ana Maria.

Gilly is a well-known Latin American Trotskyist author. His article was met with a hostile response from the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. Larry Seigle wrote a harshly worded piece arguing that Gilly's article was "an echo among those who present themselves as supporters of the Salvadoran revolution" of "enemies of the Salvadoran revolution (who) intensified their efforts to discredit and divide the FMLN" ("Adolfo Gilly's attack on the FMLN," Intercontinental Press, May 30, 1983, p. 295). Seigle argued that the FMLN's account of the incident was "a straight forward explanation" and that any questioning of the FMLN story was feeding into an imperialist "disruption campaign."

There is a problem with Seigle's pontifications. The FMLN now says that the first version of the two deaths was untrue. Rather than being part of a "disruption operation," doubts about the initial report were actually quite reasonable. Larry Seigle and the SWP leadership have put themselves in the situation of asserting that whatever the FMLN says must be true and anyone who doubts it is adding grist to the mill of the Western press. This kind of approach puts them in an awkward situation when the FMLN changes its orientation. The dignity and solidarity expressed in Gilly's article stand the test of time well.

The statement of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, Mexican section of the Fourth International, on the split in the Salvadoran revolutionary movement was issued after the FMLN changed its original explanation of events. The PRT view is expressed from the vantage point of an organization that is centrally involved in the solidarity movement with the struggle in El Salvador. In particular, the PRT played an important role in setting up the World Front in solidarity with El Salvador. This also shows that those who are

supporters of the Salvadoran people's struggle can still raise comradesly questions and differences of opinion.

Finally, the Bulletin IDOM is reprinting an informative piece from the Winter 1984 Against The Current. Robert Armstrong, a prominent journalist on Latin America and solidarity activist writes on "a split in the FMLN." One does not have to agree with everything that Armstrong says in order to find this article valuable. He is mistaken to see the tragedies in El Salvador as a "troubling commentary on the marxist-leninist Left." Rather, an understanding of the centrality of democracy expressed by Marx in his writings on the Paris Commune and by Lenin in State and Revolution will prevent such horrible events from recurring.

This discussion on democracy in the revolutionary movement is crucial because all the setbacks talked about in The Guardian's editorial were avoidable. We have to face an unpalatable but nevertheless true reality: Ana Maria of El Salvador, Maurice Bishop, Unison Whiteman, Fitzroy Bain, Jacqueline Creft, Vincent Noel and Norris Bain of Grenada were not killed by the CIA or by the Rapid Deployment Force. The fifty Lebanese Communist Party members killed in Tripoli and the hundreds of Palestinian fighters killed in the fratricidal war between supporters of Yassir Arafat and Abu Musa and his Syrian allies, were not murdered by Israeli cluster bombs or by the Mossad. These militants are not fighting alongside us today because of the actions taken by people who believed they were fighting imperialism.

Many on the left say we cannot criticize those confronting Washington. Yet the struggle against oppression and exploitation is weakened and set back by the limits of workers' democracy in the Central American and Arab revolutions.

Workers' democracy, the idea that the working class and colonial masses themselves must make the decisions on the problems facing them is not an additional enhancement or an optional extra for a revolution to succeed. It is the only way of guaranteeing the continual self-organization and mobilization of the social forces upon which the revolution must rest. For the masses to be able to make decisions on the way forward, they must have access to all the different viewpoints on the revolution's course and the ability to organize themselves into parties and tendencies in order to influence the decision-making process. It is not enough for the party to discuss with, and be influenced by the working class. Nor is it adequate for there to be popular support for the party demonstrated by frequent mobilizations. The working class must have an organized form for running society--workers' councils.

In revolutionary organizations that are striving to take state power, there is also a need for workers' democracy. There must be a way for the rank-and-file to directly decide which of conflicting orientations that are presented should be adopted. The revolutionary movement is strengthened when there is an internal situation where different opinions on the road forward are accepted as being differences inside the movement. The idea, or even worse, the action of

seeing political alternatives in the revolutionary movement as "obstacles" that have to be physically removed should be banished to the Stalinist dungeons from whence it came. Violence is a means of self-defense against the bourgeoisie, not a means of settling disputes in the revolutionary movement.

Many militants may see these ideas as utopian "Trotskyist dreams." However, the Grenadian example shows the centrality of workers' democracy. Why was it that the revolution was "already dead" before the US troops landed, as Fidel Castro has said ("Fidel Castro Speaks on Grenada," The Militant, November 25, 1983, Special Supplement)? In Grenada there was strong mass consultation in the Parish and Zonal Councils and many signs of popular support for the New Jewel Movement. But there was no way for either the NJM members or the Grenadian workers and peasants to decide questions of political orientation.

The Grenadian people, therefore, had no means to organize against the putsch of Coard and Austin. This led to the situation of confusion and demoralization which the United States took full advantage of. To put it simply, the level of workers' democracy was just not strong enough for the revolution to survive.

Our arguments in favor of workers' democracy are therefore not sideline criticisms of or hostile attacks on those fighting imperialism today. They reflect a concern for the well being of the revolutions and represent an important contribution to the political orientation of these fighters.

No Trotskyist would deny that there is much that the Fourth International can learn from the Central American revolutionaries. Valuable lessons on alliances, the relationship between the armed struggle and mass work, and on the link-up between work in the cities and in the countryside are adding to the experience of the whole revolutionary vanguard. However, the Fourth International is the crystallization of the great past strategic debates of the international workers' movements. And those experiences and struggles do have a decisive relationship to today's battles. Our defense of workers' democracy represents one element of our specific contribution to the Central American revolution. The assimilation of the need for democratic methods of discussion and decision-making within the revolution can only aid the militants of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front and those trying to rebuild the New Jewel Movement.

Whatever discussions we engage in there is one point that remains central: The responsibility of revolutionaries in the United States today is to aid the revolutions whose progress we are discussing. Our job is to build a united movement dedicated to mass action that can stay Reagan's hand and end the US intervention in Central America.

The death of Comrade Marcial

Only the truth can be revolutionary

By Adolfo Gilly

[The following article appeared in the April 22 issue of the Mexico City daily *Uno más Uno* under the headline, "Before the grave of Comrade Marcial — Only the truth can be revolutionary." The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

The masses do not rise to rebellion or throw themselves into suffering the horrors of a civil war because their leaders are capable, or because they are saints or martyrs, but because they cannot stand the oppression, humiliation, misery, and infamy any longer.

A revolution cannot be explained or justified by what its chiefs do or don't do, but by that rebellion of the masses. They undoubtedly need leaders for that struggle and they need to believe and have confidence in them, as well as in the organizations which they head. But a revolution does not break out because of the will of leaders or organizations, but because the masses cannot endure any more and all other avenues have been closed to them.

The Salvadoran revolution is the biggest, the costliest, the most extraordinary revolution in Latin America in terms of the resistance and participation of the masses, at least since the insurrection of Hidalgo and Morelos [against Spain in 1810] and since the Mexican revolution. Such a revolution subjects its militants and leaders to implacable tests and difficulties. The measure of its magnitude is that the American empire, concentrating its strength on that small country, cannot bring the revolution to its knees.

But when that empire, its allies and its friends of all kinds, pledge their hatred in such a way against a small and unprotected country, each gun obtained by the revolutionaries, and every supply item they get, represents an incalculable utilization of forces. These efforts — which the other side does not have to make — plus the constant harassment by a better armed and more powerful enemy, plus the pressure of making decisions every day on which the life or death of many *compañeros* and the revolution itself depend, put revolutionaries to a hard and unremitting test.

Those decisions should be and are discussed collectively. The ideal situation would be if the greatest possible number could participate in the discussions. But at the same time, that struggle to the death demands discretion and clandestinity; limiting participation in the discussion keeps the enemy from influencing it.

Each organization that has to conduct a revolutionary war lives with this everyday contradiction: while politics requires discussion, explanation, reasoning, and information, war

demands discretion, clandestinity, centralization of command.

It is an extremely difficult art to reach an equilibrium and prevent the closing or the poisoning of indispensable discussion with the argument, always fallacious, that discussion benefits the enemy.

To this must be added the fact that in any revolutionary war — from the Mexican revolution to the Spanish civil war — there appears inevitably the inclination to see in those who disagree with one's own politics within the revolutionary group, first an obstacle, then someone who is playing into the hands of the enemy and, finally, the enemy. And from there to the use of weapons to resolve those differences, there is only one step. The history of all revolutions testifies to this, from the English revolution of the 17th century and the French revolution of the 18th century. Nonetheless, revolutions continue to be necessary.

Under these terrible pressures, the Salvadoran revolution now finds itself at a crossroads: the leadership of one of its most powerful organizations, the FPL [People's Liberation Forces], has killed among itself.

According to the official version, a group of cadre and one leader killed Commander Ana María — and Marcial, upon finding what one of the men whom he trusted had done, committed suicide. The United Revolutionary Leadership [DRU], by signing the bare-bones communiqué, vouches for these facts and declares that it considers it "a duty and a responsibility of each and every one of our organizations, to always tell the truth before our people."

There is only one way to fulfill this commitment and to find a resolution to this heart-rending crisis: to inform, to explain, to reason, in order to be able to continue the struggle and to attenuate the effect of this blow. This means to explain to the end:

1. The political differences that existed as the basis of the crisis, so that people can know and decide for themselves;
2. The reasons for the persistence of these methods: why and how is it possible that cadre in the leadership of an organization could have believed or accepted the belief that murder can resolve a political conflict;
3. What must be done to uproot such methods. The truth, only the truth, can now open this sore, clean this wound and prepare the future of the struggle.

A leader of the FPL, Salvador Samayoa, sends us a message, reiterating that everything the communiqué says is the truth, that they affirm it, however severe the consequences may be for them, and that today more than ever the revolution and the Salvadoran people need solidarity.

While I take this request very seriously, I say: *Compañeros*, it is necessary to explain more. Nobody can ask the people to continue to believe on the basis of words. Those times are long past. It is necessary to explain, to demonstrate, to convince.

The Salvadoran revolution is not only those who fight arms in hand. It is an immense conjugation of wills and hopes far beyond El Salvador. To the last woman who gave a peso for the purchase of weapons, to the last man who went to a demonstration, to the last child who carried a banner, they need and deserve an explanation.

They have put in El Salvador much more than their efforts, they have deposited their beliefs and their hopes. It is to them that all of the truth must be explained, the whole truth. It is necessary to trust in them: the simple people, the everyday people. They understand all this, they understand the suffering, they understand the bitterest disputes, they understand suicide, they understand death better than anyone, because they understand life — that life where oppression sears their souls, hardens their will and sharpens their feelings of solidarity.

What these people don't understand, on the other hand, is reticence, half-truths, pious lies, being treated like children by those in whom they have placed their confidence, receiving consolations or triumphalist explanations "so that they do not lose heart."

To overcome this crisis, one of the toughest of the Salvadoran revolution, it is necessary to explain. Let the enemy, the allies of imperialism and its Salvadoran friends say what they want. The truth is always revolutionary. That truth must be thought out and explained.

The leadership of the FPL and the leadership of the DRU must now respond in a public conference to all of the political questions in order to disarm the slander and the poison of the enemies and strengthen the comprehension and solidarity of friends, which has been put to an extremely hard test by this tragedy. This request is my homage before the grave of Comrade Marcial. □

Reprinted from
Intercontinental Press,
May 30, 1983

On the split in the Salvadoran revolutionary movement

In the first week of December 1983, a split occurred in the People's Liberation Forces/Revolutionary People's Bloc (FPL-BPR), the largest component organization of the Salvadoran revolutionary front, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.

A minority of the FPL-BPR formed a new group called the Revolutionary Workers Movement-Salvador Cayetano Carpio (MOR).

In the second week of September the FPL issued a statement saying that the MOR had split rather than accept the decisions of the Revolutionary Council, the leadership of the FPL, adopted in August, condemning Cayetano Carpio, the main historical leader of the FPL-BPR on a series of counts.

Shortly after the issuance of the FPL statement, a declaration was issued by the FMLN on December 16 endorsing its main points and confirming the MOR's separation from the Salvadoran revolutionary front.

Below we publish the comment on the Mexican section of the Fourth International on the communiques of the FPL and the FMLN, as well as the FMLN communique, which is the most succinct statement of the position of the majority in the Salvadoran revolutionary front, including in the FPL. In our following issue, we will also publish the statement of the FPL in full.

Statement by Mexican Fourth Internationalists

Both the FMLN and the FPL have issued communiques defining their positions with respect to the formation of the Movimiento Obrero Revolucionario (MOR — Revolutionary Workers Movement). These statements not only make sharp criticisms of the MOR but publicly accuse Cayetano Carpio (Marcial) of ordering the murder of Compañera Ana Maria. The Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT, Revolutionary Workers Party) considers it necessary to make clear its disagreements with these communiques.

1. The FMLN has publicized three different versions to explain the terrible murder of Comandante Ana Maria. The first was that the CIA had committed the crime. Then it said that the perpetrator was an FPL leader called Marcelo. Now it says that the one fundamentally responsible for Ana Maria's death was Cayetano Carpio.

The FMLN has publicized two versions to explain the suicide of Compañero Cayetano Carpio. The first was that Carpio committed suicide out of grief at the murder of his long-time comrade Ana Maria. Carpio was hailed as a hero of the revolution and guide of the FMLN. Today it is said that his suicide was an act of cowardice prompted by the discovery of his role in Ana Maria's murder.

2. The FMLN criticizes those who disseminate the "sectarian and dogmatic thought of Cayetano Carpio." The PRT published an editorial in *Bandera Socialista* in which it accepted the first version about the suicide. It ran a sketch of Cayetano Carpio's life, using the biog-

raphy published in the Nicaraguan *Barricada* [the organ of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN]. It published in *La Batalla* [the PRT's theoretical journal] excerpts from Cayetano Carpio's last speech, in which he talked about the party and the sort of unity that has to be built.

We might argue, and in fact we think it is correct to do so, that the fact that the FMLN has put out so many different versions about these events — with a hero being transformed overnight into a sectarian dogmatist — has, to say the least, complicated the task of the left organizations involved in the work of solidarity with the Salvadoran revolution in properly informing the workers and peasants in our countries. But this is only part of the problem, and unfortunately the least important part.

3. The FMLN and FPL communiques characterize Marcial's thought as "sectarian and dogmatic," but they do not explain why, they just assert it. They say that Carpio was against unity. Anybody would wonder, was he for breaking up the FMLN? What specific form of unity was he against? This is just an example. We need more information, in particular the Salvadoran masses need more information. We are convinced that a debate has been going on in the FMLN and that it is not over. It has not been conducted in the best way. This debate is over the general political orientation in El Salvador and not about the role of one or another person.

Because, if it is true, as the FMLN says, that Marcial ordered the murder of Ana Maria, this would mean that political arguments were replaced by violence within the mass movement, and that would obviously make it impossible to carry out a debate.

Reprinted from
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February 13, 1984

4. We think that, considering the political positions and what we know, that the debate that was going on was among revolutionists. It is normal in a situation such as the one developing in El Salvador for different ideas and proposals to come forward. In fact, what is reflected in this debate are various levels of mass consciousness. Such a dispute can be resolved in a positive way if there are adequate channels for debating the various positions. The best way to fight factionalism is through democratic discussion, both in the political and in the social organizations.

5. The MOR represents Marcial's positions. We think that its place is in the FMLN and not outside it. We do not consider them counterrevolutionaries or agents of the CIA, since they have not committed any counterrevolutionary act. What is more, the press has reported repressive actions by the government against the MOR, and so we are obliged to offer it our solidarity.

It is true that the MOR has broken with the FPL. But to be a counterrevolutionary today in El Salvador you would have to go over to the side of the government and the imperialists. The compañeros of the MOR have not done that.

So, we are convinced that the best place for revolutionists is the FMLN, since we remained convinced that the FMLN is the vanguard of the Salvadoran revolution, we think that the MOR should be in the FMLN.

6. The FMLN has accused Cayetano Carpio of murdering Ana Maria. Carpio, however, is one of the best known leaders of the FMLN. Therefore, the evidence for this accusation should be presented to the entire revolutionary movement. Charges of such gravity cannot be made without proof.

However, if the accusation made is true, we would have to say that this is not the first time such a thing has happened, either in the world or in El Salvador. We repudiate such methods not only because we have been the target of them but because we are convinced that they lead to the destruction of the revolutionary vanguard. Recent examples such as the split in the New Jewel Movement in Grenada and the murder of its leader, Maurice Bishop, show us how disastrous the consequences of these methods can be. Revolutionists cannot allow violence to become the basis of relations among the organizations of the mass movement.

For this reason, we are convinced that workers democracy is not some sort of luxury that should be left to workers in the imperialist countries. We do not think that workers democracy is something that you can decide arbitrarily when to apply and when not to apply. After what has happened in El Salvador and Grenada, that is more evident than ever.

7. We reaffirm our commitment to the Salvadoran revolution and to its vanguard, the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional and the Frente Democratico Revolucionario. We will continue to support the revolutionary

democratic program and fight for greater solidarity. Yankee imperialism, which bears the main responsibility for the travail that the Salvadoran masses are going through, is more intent on war than ever. It is the duty of all of us to defeat this No. 1 common enemy. We understand the difficulties the FMLN has in confronting such a powerful enemy. But we are certain that sooner or later the Salvadoran people will emerge victorious and take control of their own fate by building a new society in which there is no exploitation or oppression. ■

*Political Committee of the
Partido Revolucionario de los
Trabajadores
Mexico City
January 23, 1984*

A SPLIT IN THE FMLN

by R. Armstrong

In mid-December, 1983, a group calling itself the Revolutionary Workers Movement—Salvador Cayetano Carpio (MOR) broke away from the Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL). At issue were the decisions taken by the FPL in the Seventh Revolutionary Council of the organization in August of that year. Specifically, the FPL pledged itself to building the FMLN as the vanguard of the Salvadoran revolution, abandoning its previous position that it (the FPL) was the vanguard of the FMLN. It agreed to consider political alliances with what it called members of the non-oligarchic bourgeoisie and committed itself to negotiations as an essential element of its revolutionary strategy. All of these positions moved the FPL closer to the other four organizations of the FMLN.

After the meeting some members of the organization opposed this new direction and affirmed former FPL positions regarding its vanguard role in the FMLN, eschewing alliances with any sector of the Salvadoran bourgeoisie and promoting negotiations as a tactical, not a strategic, principle. Composed primarily of urban guerrilla units in San Salvador, they have formed the MOR.

But behind these immediate issues lies a deeper crisis, the consequence of the murder last April of the second-in-command of the FPL, Anaya Melida Montes (nom-de-guerre: Ana Maria), and the subsequent suicide of the founder and principal leader of the FPL, Salvador Cayetano Carpio (nom-de-guerre: Marcial).

In a long and frank communique in mid-December, the FPL confirmed rumors that had circulated repeatedly since the tragic events that Carpio had planned and ordered the murder of Melida Montes. According to the communique, Carpio's influence within the FPL had been waning for over a year, due particularly to his intransigent insistence on the vanguard role of himself and the FPL within the FMLN. The result had been the increasing isolation of the FPL from the other revolutionary organizations and growing dissatisfaction among members of the FPL leadership with Carpio's political rigidity.

Led by Melida Montes, the younger leadership pressed for greater flexibility and a more comradely relationship with the other political-military organizations. In January 1983, the Central Committee of the FPL unanimously approved the new position. Apparently with considerable reservation, Carpio, as head of the FPL signed the document, and it was prepared for submission to the meeting of the Revolutionary Council to be held later in 1983.

In March, according to the present FPL leadership, Carpio, conspiring with another member of the Central Committee, ordered and planned the murder of his long-time colleague, telling his co-conspirator that Melida Montes had betrayed the revolution. On April 6, she was stabbed 83 times by a military unit of the FPL acting under Carpio's orders while asleep at her temporary home in Managua.

It is still too early to assess the impact of these events. Politically the FPL appears to be relatively strong and unified after the split. The breakaway MOR is small in number and enjoys only very limited support in El Salvador or internationally. The other organizations of the FMLN are supporting the FPL and view its new line and the exposure of Carpio as a positive step in strengthening the revolution.

Yet these events are profoundly disturbing. There is a mythic quality to them. How it will end is far from clear. The sons join the mother to end patriarchy; the father kills the mother; the sons expose the father. There is its troubling commentary on the marxist-leninist Left, the recurring theme of political fratricide: Stalin/Trotsky, Mao/LinPiao, Roque Dalton in El Salvador and who and how many others in what seems an inescapable determinism.

Much remains to know; much remains to be said ■

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Winter 1984

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