

International Internal Discussion Bulletin

Volume XIX, Number 1

May 1983

\$1.75

Contents

- The Stakes Involved in the 12th World Congress
are Fundamental for the Fourth International,**
by Allio, Claudio, Clelia, Duret, Frej, Jones, Segur, Walter 3
- Tendency Declaration,**
by Heredia, Hoffman, Mill, Nivert, Tess,
Revolutionary Communist League, France 6
- Why We Oppose the SWP's New Line on Castroism,**
by Steve Bloom, Socialist Workers Party, United States 11
- Counter Report on Poland,**
by Nat Weinstein, Socialist Workers Party, United States 21
- Political Principles and Organization Methods,**
by Milton Alvin, Socialist Workers Party, United States 26

International Internal Discussion Bulletin

Volume XIX, Number 1

May 1983

\$1.75

The International Internal Discussion Bulletin is the English-language edition of the internal discussion bulletin of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

It is published by the Socialist Workers Party as a fraternal courtesy to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Bulletin Department, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014

Contents

3	The States Involved in the 12th World Congress are Fundamental for the Fourth International, by Alice Claudio, Clélia, Doris, Peter, Susan, Walter
11	Tendency: Revisionism, by Howard Hoffman, Mill, Nancy, Peter, Revolutionary Communist League, France
21	Why We Oppose the SWP's New Line on Castroism, by Steve Bloom, Socialist Workers Party, United States
28	Counter Report on Poland, by Neil Weinstein, Socialist Workers Party, United States
30	Political Principles and Organization Methods, by Milton Aikin, Socialist Workers Party, United States

The Stakes Involved in the 12th World Congress Are Fundamental for the Fourth International

[The following declaration was submitted in October 1982 by the following members of the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International: Allio, LCR (France); Claudio, LCR (Italy); Clelia, LCR (France); Duret, PSO (Switzerland); Frej, SP (Sweden); Jones, IMG (Britain); Segur, LCR (France); Walter, RWL (Belgium).]

1. The pre-12th World Congress (6th since reunification) debate is taking place in an international situation characterised essentially by two features. On the one hand there is an uneven upsurge of the working masses on an international level under the impact of a long and deep capitalist crisis. And on the other hand an overall military, economic and political counteroffensive by imperialism (particularly U.S. imperialism) which has made some gains. This counteroffensive is hampered by the effects of the recession on imperialism itself (inter-imperialist contradictions, crisis of bourgeois leadership), by the numerous struggles of resistance to austerity policy inside the imperialist countries, and by the extreme precariousness of the economic situation and explosiveness of many dependent countries.

There are more and more crises both nationally and on an international scale. Political turns take place one after another at a sustained pace. It has been proved that the weak links of imperialism can be broken and in Nicaragua we see that a new workers state could be set up. This in turn increases the possibility of contradictions inside the imperialist system and favours the development of workers and mass struggles (anti-war movement) in the imperialist countries.

At the same time there is a combination of the repercussions of the imperialist economic crisis and the disastrous effects of bureaucratic management on the regimes ruled by the bureaucracies. The political revolution is shown, in the most immediate sense of the term, as the best defence of the essential gains of the workers states. A new phase in the decline of these regimes was opened with the rise of the political revolution in Poland. The workers resistance to the counterrevolution launched by Jaruselski and the Soviet bureaucracy is an indication of the radical rupture between the totalitarian bureaucratic caste and the working masses.

A confrontation between the capitalist class and its allies on the one side and the working class and its allies on the other is developing on a world scale. The success or failure of one or other of these camps in each of the particular confrontations conditions the developments of the other struggles. Thus the crisis of international revolutionary leadership and the possibilities of advancing in resolving it become clearer.

2. In the international confrontation between the working class (and its allies) and the imperialist forces, the latter find support not only from the dependent bourgeoisies but also from the ruling bureaucracies and the bureaucratic apparatuses of the workers movement. The conflicts and contradictions that can and will emerge between these forces must not obscure this fundamental fact.

The deepening of class conflicts on an international level underlines with particular force the dialectical unity of the sectors of the world revolution. It expresses the actuality of the class struggle on a world scale and not a confrontation between "blocs": on the one side imperialism and on the other the "socialist camp" and the "progressive" bourgeoisie and petty-

bourgeois forces. Developments in Central America or the Middle East confirm this. The passivity of the Soviet bureaucracy, encumbered with an economic crisis, as well as the policy of various Arab regimes during the Zionist aggression in Lebanon, illustrate it.

Strategically the workers will emancipate themselves through the overthrow of the imperialist and capitalist forces, the parasitic ruling bureaucracies, as well as politically defeat their agents in the workers movement.

Two wrong political lines can develop with respect to this. The first covers over this strategic task of the proletariat and its allies in the name of the real necessity of (for example) unconditionally supporting semi-colonial states against an imperialist attack (it subordinates the battle for class independence to the priority of the "anti-imperialist" struggle). Or else, in the name of the necessary defence of the fundamental gains of the bureaucratically deformed or degenerated workers states against an imperialist offensive, it relegates the anti-bureaucratic revolution to second place in the process of world revolution. The second orientation can result in devaluing the importance, especially in the imperialist countries, of taking an unambiguous position during a confrontation between imperialism and a semi-colonial country (independently of its political regime) or again to give up our traditional position of defence of the fundamental gains of the workers state against imperialism.

3. The development of the class struggle on the international scale, the accentuation of its proletarian character confirms in its general dynamic the actuality of the Fourth International's programme.

Thus the dynamic of workers struggles in Poland and the type of demands put forward by the workers verify for the first time with such clarity our programme of political revolution and socialist democracy.

In the same way our strategy of permanent revolution is confirmed by the extension of the Central American revolution, by the rapid explosion of the antagonisms between the social forces regrouped and led by the FSLN and those represented by the bourgeois politician Robelo, the Catholic hierarchy and the bosses organised in COSEP, and by the objectives and way forward adopted by the Central American masses in struggle. It applies in the same way to the battle in favour of class independence, for example under the form of building the Workers Party in Brazil or the defence of the workers own institutions in Iran, the Shoras, submitted to the repression of Khomeini's regime.

The struggle against bourgeois austerity policy and the class collaboration line of the reformist apparatuses underlines the present-day relevance of transitional demands and the value of the united front tactic.

For us that constitutes a starting point for the present building of the International. This increases the possibilities of the development of our forces and influence.

But here a supplementary element must be introduced. The

joint crisis of imperialism and Stalinism as well as a new phase of political decline of the nationalist currents stimulate differentiations and clarifications inside the international workers movement and the petty-bourgeois nationalist currents. To advance in the strengthening of the Fourth International it is decisive to understand the importance of this overall, contradictory process.

However to seize the possibilities which are open to us we must look systematically at our own weaknesses — on the level of political elaboration and our capacity to link up with those currents breaking from the mould of social democracy, stalinism, centrism or nationalism. At the same time it is necessary to boldly take up all problems linked to the proletarianisation of our sections.

The World Congress must be the occasion for organising a discussion on this question to respond to the real needs of building sections of the International.

4. In the present international context there is increasing pressure aiming to get people to adopt a political line which defines the dividing line of international confrontations in terms of a struggle between "opposed social systems." This is expressed in organisations like the Chilean MIR, the Fedayeen majority in Iran, nationalist currents in the Basque country, etc. The result is clear, for example, support for the Polish bureaucracy against the workers upsurge in Poland or adaptation to the Khomeini regime, characterised as "anti-imperialist."

The breadth of the imperialist counterattack and the character of the Reagan administration are often used as a justification for such an orientation. Another fundamental feature of this "campist" approach is related to a particular appreciation of the international situation. It consists in transforming the war danger (which is real) into a generalised war danger in the short term. It says that this danger is already being concretised in the form of American imperialism's counteroffensive in Central America or the Middle East. An equal sign is thus put between local and regional counterrevolutionary wars (against the rise of colonial revolution) and a world war. A continuity is introduced between these counterrevolutionary wars (which have marked the history of imperialism since the Second World War) and a world war.

Such an explicit or more or less implicit analysis of the international situation has in reality two results:

a) The confrontations between the classes on a world scale with all their aspects are not taken as the starting point of analysis and orientation: crisis of imperialist leadership; exacerbated contradictions inside the degenerated or deformed workers states; counterrevolutionary role of the stalinist bureaucracy's policy; and counterrevolutionary policy of the dependent bourgeoisies against the workers and peasant masses.

b) It orders the strategic political tasks of revolutionaries around an axis of regroupment and consolidation of the progressive forces (inside of which the so-called "socialist" camp plays a key role). This implies a judgement on the effects of the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy! The latter is no longer considered as a counterrevolutionary force, either on the basis of its role in the USSR and in the Eastern European countries, or on the basis of its international policy in terms of the interests of the masses.

5. Inside the Fourth International an orientation, within which the adaptation to "campism" begins to be revealed as a significant element, has been developed by several sections' leaderships: the SWP (United States), SAL (New Zealand), LOR/RWL (Canada) and SWP (Australia). It comes through for example in various contributions from the SWP (U.S.) leadership although it has not submitted any resolution at the last two IEC meetings in 1981 and 1982. Adaptation to the overall policy of the Castroist leadership, an evaluation of the international situation (imminence of war) as well as the role of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist forces in the process of the colonial revolu-

tion — all these elements interact and mutually reinforce each other. The consequence is a conception of the priority tasks for the International which are drawn up in terms of the hierarchical importance given to different sectors of the world revolution. There is also the beginning of wide-ranging programmatic revisions (on the permanent revolution or the political revolution). This is the origin of the debate on the content and forms of solidarity with Solidarnosc, after the 13th December, on the perspectives of the Iranian revolution, or again the differences on the overall policy of the PLO leadership.

The result of this line is the answer given by the SWP (U.S.) leadership to the building of the International — regroup the revolutionary forces, among whom is the Fourth International, around the Castroist leaderships and the new revolutionary leaderships which have emerged in Nicaragua or in Grenada. For the SWP this is already the axis for the building of a mass revolutionary International.

6. The position developed by the SWP leadership reflects debates inside certain currents of the workers movement, under the combined influence of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution, the rise of revolutionary struggles in Latin America and the full blooded imperialist counteroffensive. Therefore discussion inside the International once again expresses real political problems posed by the class struggle on a world scale. Our disagreement with the SWP leadership's positions should not at all obscure this aspect of the problem.

We can draw one conclusion — the pre-World Congress debate must allow us to verify those points of the present disagreements which flow from the differences over the conjuncture, the relationship of forces in such or such a country or region of the world, or the policy of the Cuban leadership in such or such a situation and those which flow from more systematic disagreements on the dialectic of the three sectors of the world revolution, the role in this framework of the policies of the ruling bureaucracies, the national bourgeoisies and the bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalist leaderships.

This discussion on building the International needs to clarify first of all these questions. It is within this framework that we must place the debate on building the International, on the political character and line of the Cuban leadership and our relations with it.

Once we are clear on these questions it is then also possible to have a polemic with currents (for example the Lambertists) which have displayed blind sectarianism to revolutionary upsurges and victories during the Vietnamese and Central American revolutions.

These revolutions are "analysed" either as a simple result of the pressure of the masses on the Vietnamese CP or the FSLN, or that these leaderships with a majority in the mass movement but fiercely opposed to taking power were supposedly forced by the masses to seize power in order not to be outflanked by them! Sectarianism and negation of reality are here marvellously combined! This leads to a conception of building the International which marginalises it from the real processes of recomposition and differentiation in the workers movement and the revolutionary forces internationally. Political and organisational sectarianism are thus logically intertwined.

7. In light of the possibilities opening for the building of the International and of its present debates, it seems to us necessary to focus as a priority the discussion of the 12th World Congress on:

- 1) the present phase of the world revolution;
 - 2) the building of the International in this framework.
- The World Congress must take a position on these questions. It alone can do this with political authority. It is a concrete necessity for the functioning and building of the International to

define an orientation and line and elect a leadership on this basis. To not organise the World Congress around such axes means diluting the overall political definition of the International and its sections, blocking its functioning as an International and holding back its activity and that of its sections. It would particularly reduce present possibilities of building the International.

• Indeed programmatic and theoretical discussions (on the permanent revolution, the workers and peasants government, etc.) must be started today. This is already the case. But these debates need time. It would be doubtlessly premature at this World Congress to vote on these questions as such before they can be adequately dealt with by the membership in the sections. Or else that would imply a postponing of the World Congress with all the negative consequences pointed out above for the building of the International. Discussion on these questions can and must be prolonged beyond the World Congress. It can also be the subject of a public discussion. The permanent revolution and the political revolution are part of the founding programme of the Fourth International. Either it is a question of enriching these gains and this must be done in the light of a real synthesis of unfolding revolutionary experiences. Or it is a case of questioning these programmatic gains. In the latter case we would need a congress of programmatic re-definition, an "extraordinary" congress.

Around the question of "Building the International in the present period" we can discuss the following: the political character and overall political line of the Cuban leadership and our relations with it; the policy of sections towards the process of differentiations and regroupments on the international scale (see the May 1981 IEC resolution part 6 and Segur's report at the May 1982 IEC, English-language *IIDB*, No. 6); the more specific problems of building sections, among others and above all the systematic implantation of sections in sectors of the industrial proletariat and their trade union work (see Frej's report at the May 1982 IEC, English-language *IIDB*, No. 7).

Emphasising these two questions allows us to organise the dis-

ussion for the 12th World Congress and to make it more functional and accessible for our membership.

Given the importance of the *political revolution in Poland*, and the possibility the International has of verifying and enriching our conceptions and the programme of the political revolution in light of its lessons, we must absolutely keep this point on the World Congress agenda. Similarly we must integrate the development of *the revolution in Central America*. Also the World Congress, in line with the 11th World Congress decision, must definitively decide on the resolutions dealing with "The dictatorship of the proletariat and Socialist democracy," its key importance has been demonstrated by developments in the political debate.

By focusing the World Congress agenda in this way we respond to a dual necessity — to have a clearer debate and to hold the World Congress within a reasonable time limit (at the end of 1983) while ensuring a real participation of the sections' membership in the discussion.

But such a choice implies that questions just as important for our sections and the International are not put on the agenda — such as the situation in France, the Iranian revolution, or developments in the Middle East. Before the World Congress these points must be put on the agenda of international leadership meetings and be the subject of discussions and resolutions worked out in collaboration with the leaderships of the organisations concerned. *The conclusions reached in these resolutions should be integrated both in the resolution on the present stage of the world revolution and in the one on building the International.*

The debate opened in the Fourth International for its 12th World Congress is fundamental. It is concerned very much with the relationship between the world situation and the possibilities of building the Fourth International, in effect on the validity of the programmatic foundations of the Fourth International in this period of world revolution and the party-building tasks linked to that.

Tendency Declaration

by Heredia, Hoffman, Mill, Nivert, Tess

The 1982 IEC opened the pre-12th World Congress discussion. At the beginning of the debate things look very bad. The Fourth International is today going through a *major political crisis*. People seem to still not be aware (and this to a large extent is because the sections are badly informed and at no time have been mobilised around the controversial questions as was the case during previous congresses) that this crisis is nonetheless more serious than those that have marked the history of our movement in the last twelve years.

At the centre of the crisis is the evolution of the international minority which is led by the SWP of the United States. In a few years the American trotskyst organisation has taken political positions which little by little have taken them away from the general theoretical basis which guides the practice of revolutionary marxists. If indeed it has continued to courageously oppose the imperialist policy of its own country it has at the same time chosen to align itself — without any real demarcation — on the positions of the Cuban state. *In the same way it is led to justify to a large extent the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and to give up in practice revolutionary opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy*. It is a challenge to, a liquidation of a decisive element of world revolutionary strategy the defence of which constitutes the historic justification of the Fourth International.

There is a risk this evolution will lead to a new split — more important than the previous ones — to the extent that the SWP is one of the oldest trotskyst organisations, it is in the most powerful imperialist country and it has regrouped on its positions several important sections. *That is a grave danger against which we must vigorously react*.

But all members should be clearly conscious that this crisis is situated within a context of political and organisational difficulties which affect the whole of the Fourth International. At the present time it has to face up to theoretical and practical problems which neither its functioning nor the practice of its leadership has permitted it to collectively approach with the necessary seriousness:

- The world development of revolutionary struggles follows a *contradictory course* which poses revolutionaries with complex problems. If we can point to successes which mark the international relationship of forces (Iran, Central America and to a lesser degree the socialist victories in France and Greece), imperialism has also made gains in important sectors (particularly Palestine). Furthermore we have seen in several of the unfolding revolutions the establishment of regimes which are or risk to be in the long term, obstacles to the emancipation of the workers. In the advanced capitalist countries the crisis of the workers movement is not limited to the crisis of its leadership but under certain aspects affects the proletariat itself.

- The occupation of Afghanistan, conflicts between China and Vietnam as well as "Pol Potism," the military coup d'état in Poland against the most powerful working class movement the world has seen for years show that the degeneration of the "workers states" is deepening and illustrates *the counter-revolutionary role of the most important ones*.

- In this context the Fourth International as a world organisation and a number of its important sections are experiencing *serious organisational difficulties*. The least we can say is that the

growth of our movement in the sixties and at the beginning of the seventies has slowed up and its capacity to play a leading role in mass struggles has declined.

It would be fruitless to deny the reality of these problems. It would be absurd to claim to solve them by a simple repetition of principles — which no-one is challenging — or by declaring a confidence in the future. However justified that may be it hardly influences the conjuncture. A wide-ranging democratic debate is indispensable to resolve new questions which are facing revolutionaries on the tactical level and in the theoretical domain.

The International's leadership has not been able to take the initiative in this big confrontation, which has only facilitated the SWP's drifting away. At the present time the abandoning of principles by the international minority constitutes the main threat we have to confront in our own ranks. But we must never forget the context in which we have to situate our struggle — not a simple opposition of the partisans of "orthodoxy" (which, when all is said and done, does not really exist) to the "liquidationists" but the defence of the gains of the revolutionary programme in the perspective of enriching it.

The SWP adrift

We can understand the objective basis of the SWP's evolution. A very small organisation intervening in a country which is not only the most powerful imperialism but whose workers movement has not reached the stage of independent political organisation, the SWP is subject to considerable pressure. Furthermore it had a real break in its historical continuity — the majority of its cadres, many of whom came out of mass trade union struggles, at one stage left. The new leadership formed in the student struggles of the sixties has neither the same traditions, nor the same experience of the workers movement as the previous team. For a long time it reacted against the difficulties arising from the delay in our development by a retreat to the defence of the "gains of Trotskyism" conceived in an "bookish" way and therefore expressed in an increasingly dogmatic way. It has continually accentuated an organisation tradition presented as bolshevik but which is in practice very administrative and could pass for being bureaucratic. Therefore, given the difficulties of building the International all conditions existed for bringing about demoralisation and its corollary, the frantic search for a substitute leadership and programme: those of the Cuban state, whose leadership is presented as the main marxist pole of the revolution in our time.

The SWP leaders and their supporters parade as realists who know how to recognise and be part of an unfolding revolution and how to not create obstacles of secondary differences. The reality is quite different. *The SWP has little by little given up the overall theoretical bases of revolutionary action for our time* — bases explicitly laid down by the reunification World Congress in 1963.

The SWP has given up basing world revolutionary strategy on the dialectical unity of the three sectors of the world revolution.

- For the SWP the axis of the international situation is the confrontation between the bloc of imperialist countries and the "workers states." It is led thus to confer a positive value on Moscow's foreign policy (something which has not been the case for

many years) as relayed by Havana. It makes the "unconditional defence" of the USSR a strategic axis of revolutionary policy — which is foreign to the real tradition of our movement. In fact the SWP tends to privilege conflicts between states rather than mass struggles. Without exaggerating we can talk of a slide towards what one can call "campism."

● *From that starting point the SWP comes to question in practice the actuality of the political revolution in the "degenerated workers states."*

It was thus incapable of understanding the political significance of the struggle of *Solidarnosc* in Poland — reducing it to simple trade union actions — and refusing to characterise the seizure of power by the military as a coup d'état.

● *Parallel to this the SWP is questioning the theoretical bases of permanent revolution.*

Starting from real problems raised by the victory in Nicaragua of the Sandinistas allied to an important faction of the bourgeoisie, it has put forward a theory of the workers-peasants alliance which denies in practice the proletarian and socialist nature of anti-imperialist revolutions.

Here we are just referring to the most striking aspects of what we have to call a liquidation of the political basis for the autonomy of revolutionaries from the bureaucratic states and apparatuses. It is the political identity of our movement which is seriously endangered.

A paralysed majority

Against this danger the majority leadership of the International is leading the battle in a defensive way, making far too many political concessions under the cover of organisational compromises. Certainly nobody dreams of denying the need for patience, pedagogy and of flexibility to try and stop the drift and political degeneration of one of the oldest trotskyist organisations. On condition however that the fundamental debate is carried out publicly and without concessions.

This has not been the conduct of the USec majority. And its attitude, far from pushing the danger back, increases it through the space it gives to the mixture of boldness and ambiguity with which the SWP leadership pursues its programmatic revisionism and spreads its influence on the weakest zones of our movement. This defensive approach has subjective bases whose roots go back a long way.

The first of these roots is the very continuity of its relations with the SWP — organised on a power to power basis — where interference into the other's internal affairs is forbidden. The only thing allowed is a simple political critique of numerous opportunist errors in the recent history of the SWP (the more pacifist than revolutionary defeatist aspects of its struggle against the Vietnam war; its frequent limiting of the struggle for the Black cause to legal channels and lack of clear differentiation of the feminist struggle from that of petit-bourgeois currents etc). These errors originated both in a wrong appreciation of the dynamic of democratic demands and a debatable conception of mass work. The USec's silence with respect to them resulted in abandoning the International Tendency (IT), which was formed inside the SWP during the period of the 10th World Congress, at the very moment when the SWP leadership was proceeding to liquidate this tendency by the worst bureaucratic means.

A second root cause — flowing from the first — is again the continuity of concessions and compromises negotiated with the SWP since the self-dissolution of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction (LTF) formed around the 10th World Congress by a bloc of the SWP and the Morenoist Argentinian PST.

a) On Latin America, by adopting at the 11th World Congress a resolution with a "trade unionist" orientation and the abandonment of the 10th World Congress line. This was at the very mo-

ment when the victory in Nicaragua, the civil war in El Salvador and soon in Guatemala, justified this line (which had rectified the wrong guerrillaist line of the 9th World Congress).

b) On Cuba, due to the ambiguity of the May 1981 IEC resolution on the "centrist" nature of the Castroist leadership and the refusal to make a judgement on the stages of its historical evolution and on the necessity of a revolutionary marxist programme of political and social demands in Cuba.

c) The common adoption by the 11th World Congress of the so-called line of the "turn to industry." A sectarian turn. A replacement gadget for the bankrupt orientation of the so-called "world trotskyist movement," based on a "workerist" conception of the necessary and constant — therefore patient and progressive — proletarianisation of our movement. This line, which does not avoid "bolshevikisation" features — has produced disasters, particularly in the SWP but also in Germany and Great Britain, provoking corrections by the majority at the 1981 and 1982 IEC meetings. But there has been no self-criticism of the fundamental agreement — which explains the little resonance of these rectifications in the sections — which are abandoned to the most diverse interpretations of the line.

A third root cause of the majority attitude resides in sharing a series of wrong political and organisational conceptions, showing the common weakness of working class implantation and its consequences: the common tendency to the dogmatisation of our programme. These serious weaknesses are mainly expressed in the following ways.

1) *The line of unifying the so-called "world trotskyist movement."* This replaced the difficult linking up with the new revolutionary vanguards by the illusory grouping together in the framework of our International of degenerated formations — a degeneration caused either by capitulation to social democracy (Lambertists) or by adventurism and opportunism in all directions (Morenoists) — which are dead weights from the past of our movement. This orientation was particularly dangerous for the programmatic identity of the International since it fed the illusions of a World Trotskyist movement cemented together purely by the reference to the 1938 Transitional Programme. Consequently it opened the way to a sectarian and dogmatic drift — separating our historic and programmatic references from their necessary bringing up to date and enrichment in the class struggle.

The wretched failure of this orientation, considered central and strategic from 1978 to the end of 1979, has provoked two opposed reactions: From the majority side there is a maintenance of this line, simply postponed to an indeterminate future without acknowledgement of it as fundamentally incorrect. From the SWP and the international minority there was a 180 degree turn in favour of an alignment on Castroism, in spite of the dependence of the latter on the USSR, in the hope of linking up with revolutionary forces in Central America.

2) *The wrong line for a year and a half on Afghanistan.* This shows how inside the international majority itself stagnation in the field of the theory of Stalinism and of the USSR as a "degenerated workers state" could feed a tendency to analyse the relationship of forces in the world in terms of opposition between "camps."

3) *Just recently, the serious error of analysis and line during the Malvinas war.* By supporting Argentina, a military dictatorship, against England on the sole pretext that the latter was one of the dominant imperialist nations, the international majority showed a profound misunderstanding of worldwide economic and social developments. Furthermore it displays a tendency to neglect the class struggle in Argentina to the advantage of a schema — more or less campist — of confrontation between blocs and states. This results in seriously disarming our move-

ment, compromising in the same way its possibilities of development in Latin America.

4) *The opportunist position on Khomeini and the leadership in power in Iran.* The indispensable defence of social transformations born out of the mass movement which overthrew the Shah has increasingly taken on the form of a fairly uncritical support of the ruling group and a serious ambiguity in the denunciation of counter-revolutionary repression which has a mass character and directly threatens the future of the Iranian revolution. Our current in this way cuts itself off from currents hostile to Khomeini which, whatever their political weakness, can evolve towards revolutionary marxist positions (for example the Mudjahedin).

5) *The challenge in practice of the strategic necessity of independent women's movements.* The ambiguities in the 11th World Congress resolution permits such an attitude. It opens the way to all those who try to reduce the struggle against oppression to mixed, one-off initiatives, limited to the demand of equal rights between men and women and based essentially on trade union structures.

6) *The mediocre way in which the problem of building youth organisations is taken up.* The timid national advances made in building Youth Organisations in several countries mean we have to rediscuss our analysis of youth, its forms of radicalisation. Without this elaboration there is a big danger of restricting youth organisations to merely the immediate needs of the adult organisation — the turn proposed at the last IEC being the most striking example of this.

A wrong conception of the International

A fourth root-cause of the majority attitude — and without doubt the most important in the present conjuncture — resides in the very conception of building the International.

After 1968 there was a large agreement in the International with the idea that the new conditions and relationship of forces between the classes allowed us to envisage in practice the extension of the International to include currents which did not share all our programmatic tradition. This idea was only able to be concretised in a limited number of cases: Argentina, where unfortunately the errors of the 9th World Congress line did not aid us to bring the PRT onto revolutionary marxist positions or even to keep a part of its militants in our ranks once the break was inevitable (a massive majority followed their leadership); and Spain where the fusion between the LCR and ETA-IV was a success.

In the second half of the seventies the ebbing away of the hopes born around 1968 meant the disappearance of formations on the basis of which we had hoped to achieve an extension of the FI. Except for a few national examples we are faced with:

- currents supporting the "trotskyist tradition" but whose practice (up to breaking with the revolutionary programme in the case of the Morenoists) clearly demonstrates the formal character of this reference, which has nothing to do with the essential contribution of Trotsky to marxist method and theory.

- revolutionary currents, playing a leading role in the class struggle of their country but whom — often through the intermediary of Cuba or Vietnam — go along with the share-out of the world and of the Soviet Union's leadership over the so-called "progressive bloc."

The SWP has declared itself ready to build a mass international with these latter currents — at the price of accepting their political base. We have to clearly understand — and we can never repeat this enough — that this implies a restriction of support (which must be effective unitary and massive) to the Polish revolution and its organisation *Solidarnosc* — which is an essential element of the revolutionary struggle today. Coming after the

Afghan affair, the more than ambiguous position adopted by the SWP must be judged for what it is: an obstacle to our world organisation linking up with currents of mass radicalisation which express the increasingly broadly shared perception by workers of the counterrevolutionary reality of stalinism. Consequently it is an obstacle to building a revolutionary International.

For its part the International majority, conscious of the difficulties of extending our organisation withdrew "inwards" and according to modalities which vary in function of the period its efforts are given over to approaches to currents of the "Trotskyist tradition." To try and achieve that it makes the worst political concessions. (Remember the period when it did not see any programmatic differences with the OCRFI — except on the question of the re-unification of Germany). For it the unity of the International seems to be an end in itself and not a means at the service of a clearly defined policy.

There are many consequences of this attitude. The first and doubtlessly the most serious produces a withering away of collective working out of political line and analysis. The concern to avoid conflicts which could end in splits means a public and prolonged silence on the most serious differences. Debates remain discreetly behind closed doors, they rarely come before the membership as a whole. One is forbidden to publicly take positions on the policies of sections which drift from our common positions. (How much time was necessary before we justly denounced the counter-revolutionary adventurism of the Morenoists?) *It is the necessary political centralisation of our struggles around a constantly enriched programme which is challenged by this practice.* The result of which is to give free expression to politically contradictory tendencies, albeit having the same reference to the Fourth International but of whom certain are an obstacle to our development. Consequently it is normal that paralysis and indeed dogmatism grows apace: the fear of debate and the desire to maintain a formal unity at all costs requires that we cover up questions which could divide people and limit ourselves to a scholastic reference to the letter of the programme.

This state of affairs also affects the functioning of the International. The USec majority behaves as if our movement was a federation of blocs where the relationship of forces is sorted out by summit agreements between unchangeable leaders. In the system where the "caucus" is king, members are usually solicited to support — without possibility of real demarcation — theses coming down from on high. The main victim is democracy since information is too often measured out in dribs and drabs for those who are not inside or close to the "leading bodies." This practice, which very much takes on aspects of "apparatus federalism," results in fact in a centralism which is not at all democratic. The least one can say is that it is strange in a movement whose founder, Leon Trotsky, always preferred programmatic clarity to organisational patch-ups.

The majority of the International admits that this conception is in contradiction with the revolutionary marxist tradition. But it states that no other one is viable and that trying to be more strict and having more political centralisation would bring about chain reaction splits in the Lambert-Moreno style. It refuses to see that this regime is contradictory with programmatic elaboration and prevents neither splits nor permanent blackmail for a split from the SWP. It retreats in a panicky way faced with these threats.

All these points highlight the majority's responsibility for the present situation. This is what leads us to not have confidence in the International's present majority leadership's ability to lead the coming battle. All its recent actions — from its fawning to the OCRFI a little while ago to the delay in denouncing the Argentinian PST and its hesitation in fighting the SWP's errors from the first signs, has created an irreversible situation.

Fourth International and mass international

Against a compromise policy we put forward the necessity of a rigorous struggle on all levels against the theoretical and political drift of the International minority.

This struggle cannot be carried out as a defence of orthodoxy, counterposing dogmatism to liquidationism.

To the contrary we are hostile to the idea that our programme has been fixed once and for all by the 1938 Transitional Programme (which means we consider as revolutionary marxists — at least potentially — all those who claim formally to be so). We think the pre-12th World Congress debate must be the time for a fundamental programmatic reorientation, resulting in a sharp clarification of our present programme.

With respect to the International we want to emphasise two fundamental points:

a) *We must continue the fight for a mass International.* It is excluded that this objective can be achieved by a simple expansion of the present forces of the Fourth International. We must therefore prepare ourselves for regroupments and fusions with organisations and currents who will be strangers to our tradition and furthermore will not be in agreement with the whole of our programme. It is possible to build a common organisation with such currents immediately when there is an agreement on the essential question of the struggle against the bourgeoisies and the bureaucracies. This conception of the future must rightaway orient our political and organisational ideas. It requires from us an open and fraternal offensive attitude to currents breaking with nationalism, reformism, and stalinism.

b) On the other hand the Fourth International is the only world group of revolutionary cadres that exists today. In this sense it is an irreplaceable instrument in the struggle for a mass International. The justification for its existence rests in its programme and the capacity it has to enrich it in function of the development of the class struggle.

It is in function of this programmatic necessity that we must envisage the structure and functioning of the International — which needs to be adapted to the conditions imposed by the class struggle. On this level the widest democracy must exist. No majority decision should be ever imposed on all the organisations if it is not collectively worked out with clear debates (public as much as possible). The very ideas put forward by the draft resolution "Socialist Democracy and Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (necessary plurality of revolutionary parties, generalised self-management) require that our International is itself the model of democratic organisation whose centralism comes from maximum democracy and which does not parade as the unique, authentic potential leadership of the socialist revolution.

Such ideas are obviously the complete opposite of a pseudo-democratic centralism on a world scale which, assuming that the world party we need has already been built, tries to impose administrative discipline. It is not a case of going back to a regime that in 1952-53 brought about the break up of the International. On the contrary, all differences which do not result in capitulation to the bourgeoisies or the bureaucracies must be the subject of a wide-ranging debate, respecting the independent decision-making powers of the sections on national political questions. From this point of view the principle adopted by the Reunification Congress is correct but the practice is something different: a solution which is just as bad as a generalised laxism, a sort of special federalism, institutionalising a leadership on several levels which, from one substitution to another, comes to impose decisions taken without discussion, debate or even clear mandates, on the basis of principles that are so general that they do not enrich any living collective working out of political line.

Once again programmatic rigour must be a priority, whatever the repercussions are. And this rigour requires a constant en-

hancement of the programme.

Enriching our programme

For us it is clear this re-evaluation must bear today essentially on the following points:

1. *The analysis of the ruling bureaucracies and the states formed after socialist revolutions.*

These social systems cannot be reduced to the common label of stalinism — unless we admit implicitly the existence of a universal bureaucratic class in expansion. It is useful to establish the risks of bureaucratisation inherent in each particular revolutionary situation, given the specific types of parties involved and to work out in detail the political and organisational measures which can combat them. At the other extreme we need to re-open the debate on the characterisation of the state in the USSR, China and in the countries of Eastern Europe. By basing ourselves particularly on the work of our East European comrades, we can see that although the base of their economy remains collective they are no longer workers states.

The Polish experience through its lessons, particularly on the form of workers organisation and on the aspirations to self-management must be the subject of particular attention. The study of this process can only enrich the debate around "Socialist Democracy-Dictatorship of the Proletariat." By doing this we can set up lasting political links with anti-bureaucratic oppositions in the East.

2. *Revolutionary strategy in Europe.*

We must break with the catastrophist schema drawn from the elevation of the October revolution into a universal model. The present situation in Europe, that of France in particular, pose a series of difficult problems. The combination of the crisis of capitalism with that of the traditional workers organisations has consequences on the level of political consciousness and combativity of the workers. One cannot confront these phenomena by the simple re-affirmation of the inevitability of class confrontation leading to the outbreak of pre-revolutionary situations — as we always tend to do in our congress resolutions. We must study the structural modifications of the proletariat, the evolution of the modern forms of state, etc.

In the same way the experience of the most recent revolutions — in Portugal but also and especially in Poland — must cause us to deepen our reflections on forms of workers organisations. The Solidarnosc experience should enrich our general idea of the relations between mass movement, party and trade unions. More generally we have to highlight the existence of a *general tendency to workers control and socialist self-management and make it our own.*

This orientation means:

1. A permanent effort to achieve the workers united front, less than ever reducible to a battle for the unity of the reformist organisations but which must be a permanent search for mass action by workers self-organisation.

2. Particular attention needs to be paid to social movements which, on the basis of the crisis of social relations in late capitalism, mobilise in all countries important forces which we need to win to the battle for socialism.

3. A non-sectarian policy in order to influence the factors of recomposition at work in the workers movement, looking for united action, debate and linking up both with other revolutionary organisations which are ready for this and with revolutionary currents in the traditional political and trade union organisations of the workers movement. Indeed the only way forward for building a revolutionary party having influence is to be opposed to any line of sterile auto-proclamation or the sole perspective of linear growth from a pre-established nucleus.

Given the urgency of all these problems we also support the request for the European situation to be put on the 12th World Congress agenda as a specific point.

We approach the Cuba discussion from the point of view of the country's internal evolution under an already very bureaucratized leadership which we consequently oppose with a revolutionary marxist programme. We also take as a starting point its foreign policy and how it is linked with that of the USSR, particularly in Central and Latin America where our support to the centrist leaderships can only be a critical and our own action independent and directly linked to the fighting forces.

This discussion cannot in our opinion be dissociated from the necessary correction of our line for Latin America and by the particular study of possible alliances in the framework of the theory of permanent revolution.

4. The development of the struggle against women's oppression. More than ever our principle "No socialism without Women's Liberation" takes on considerable relevance. The

crisis of capitalism particularly affects millions of women and facilitates the development of their struggles. At the same time feminist movements in a lot of countries are going through big changes and crises. It is our duty to contribute to the strategic reflection on the forms of an autonomous women's movement against all domains of oppression by taking up again a debate which was not carried out particularly well at the 11th World Congress.

5. Finally on all the aspects of building the International we defend the principles recalled above, to which we add giving up the "turn" as a strategic line or even as a unilateral system of building sections and even less youth organisations, and its replacement by plans of implantation in the working class specific to different types of sections and adapted to revolutionary strategy in their sectors of the world.

Given these objectives, which will be the subject of studies and resolutions by us, we constitute ourselves as a tendency.

Why We Oppose the SWP's New Line on Castroism

by Steve Bloom

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

At its last convention in August 1981, the Socialist Workers Party adopted a new line on Castroism. This marked the formal approval by the party majority of a line that the Political Committee had been actually implementing for some time before the convention. The leadership of the SWP has projected its perspective on this question as the correct one for the entire Fourth International.

It is essential to come to grips with the theoretical and practical implications of the orientation proposed by the SWP leadership. Its line is motivated primarily by the development of the Nicaraguan and Grenadan revolutions, and the healthy reaction of the Castro leadership in Cuba to these events. This, it is argued, dictates that the Fourth International adopt an active orientation toward the forces that are extending the socialist revolution in practice in the western hemisphere.

Such an orientation is needed by our world movement. The problem arises in discussing precisely what *kind* of orientation toward the Castroist current we should adopt. The line proposed by the SWP leadership would orient us toward Castroism by beginning to call into question a whole series of theoretical and programmatic acquisitions. It goes considerably further than simply attempting to "speak the same language" as the Castroists — to translate our own program in order to eliminate artificial barriers. Attempts of this nature can only be applauded and encouraged. But what is being proposed by the SWP majority is something quite different. We will see this as we analyze the practical results of the new line for our work in the United States.

What has begun to occur in the press and propaganda of the SWP is the construction of theoretical bridges between our perspectives and those of the Castroists in areas where our views are, in fact, incompatible. This is occurring around such questions as workers' democracy, Stalinism and the political revolution, and the role of the neocolonial bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist struggle. This process is still in its initial stages, though it has been deepened and extended even since our 1981 convention. If allowed to proceed it can only result in the theoretical disarming of our movement. It has already led to a number of serious mistakes.

We favor an orientation that seeks to fuse in action the international Trotskyist movement with the new revolutionary leaderships in Central America and the Caribbean. These leaderships are in the forefront of the struggle to advance the world revolution. We must join together and fight side by side on every possible occasion. But we cannot idealize the theoretical or ideological consciousness of the Castroists. We must recognize the programmatic limitations of this current on certain key aspects of the international class struggle. *And we must strive to win them over to our perspectives on these questions*; to counterpose our ideas to theirs in a comradely and friendly fashion when they are, in fact, counterposed in real life. We cannot blur theoretical distinctions, or try to pretend that differences don't exist. To do so can only be destructive to our goal of building a mass international revolutionary movement capable of overthrowing world imperialism and introducing the era of international socialist

cooperation.

Let's examine some of the questions on which the SWP leadership has begun to adapt unacceptably to the Castroists' incorrect and one-sided theoretical conceptions. This will clearly reveal the wrong turn they have taken.

Workers' democracy

One area where serious illusions about Castroism have developed in the SWP is on the question of workers' democracy. This is a question where we have historically noted serious deficiencies in and dangers to the Cuban revolution. Some progress in terms of institutionalized democratic forms has been made with the development of the Assemblies of People's Power, but this development remains limited in terms of its real content.

The new SWP line on Castroism, however, has led to the idealization of the degree of workers' democracy in Cuba today, and the consciousness of the Castro leadership on this question — an artificial and one-sided emphasis on the positive aspects, and a downplaying, or ignoring, of the negative features. Here is how the resolution adopted at the 1981 convention discusses this question:

From their own successes and failures, the Cuban revolutionists have learned the value of institutionalizing democratic participation by the working class. . . .

Over the past decade, progress has been made toward institutionalizing democratic decision making and participation by the working class: the unions, farmers' organizations, women's federation, and neighborhood Committees for Defense of the Revolution have been strengthened; elected organs of People's Power have been established and are evolving and gaining experience on the local, provincial, and national levels; a mass based Territorial Troops Militia has been launched to counter imperialist threats in reaction to revolutionary gains in the region (this gives every Cuban the right to bear arms as part of a well-regulated militia); and more workers, women, and veterans of internationalist missions are being brought into the party and elected to the Cuban CP Central Committee. This sets an example for workers organizations throughout the world.

As the world revolution advances, and the working class increasingly asserts itself on an international scale, conditions for advancing the institutionalization of workers democracy in Cuba will be enhanced. In turn, lags and weaknesses in this uncompleted institutionalization process are a brake on internationalism, economic development, and proletarian morale. (*IIDB*, Volume XVIII #1, April 1982, p. 7.)

There are several things wrong with this passage. The most important is that it refuses to recognize that the incomplete forms of workers' democracy in Cuba are a result of a fundamental *political* weakness of Castroism. This is a weakness, to be sure, that stems from the historical roots of this current, and from the ideological dominance of Stalinism in the workers' states on which Cuba depends for economic support. But recognizing the material roots of Castroism's ideological weaknesses cannot be an excuse for pretending they do not exist or are unimportant, or merely represent some kind of deficiency in practical policy. Yet

this is precisely what the SWP resolution argues when it talks about "lags and weaknesses in this uncompleted institutionalization process."

One distinction that the SWP's analysis completely leaves aside, is between democratic *forms* and democratic *actions*. Castroism has always been strong on the question of mobilizing the masses in defense of their interests. Revolution itself is the most democratic of such mobilizations. And such democratic actions constitute the bulk of evidence cited by the SWP resolution in its discussion of Cuban democracy. But no matter how much the Cuban workers and farmers may be involved in mass demonstrations or mass organizations, these cannot be a substitute for institutionalized forms through which the workers and farmers can actually run the country and make governmental decisions. In understanding this, Castroism has been and remains extremely weak.

This is not a matter of the masses having *input* into governmental decisions; and it isn't a matter, as we have said, of forms by which the masses participate in *carrying out* such decisions. Both of these are *aspects* of workers' democracy. But they are not its *essence*.

The essence of workers' democracy is the right of the masses to be the actual *rulers*, the decision-makers in society. The lack of this constitutes a serious danger to the future of the Cuban revolution. In the long term it cannot rely primarily on the consciousness and abilities of the leadership team around Castro, no matter how honest they may be or how deep their revolutionary consciousness.

Workers' democracy cannot exist in any real way if workers who disagree with governmental policy have no right to organize themselves to advocate a change of that policy or to replace the leadership. We must defend and advocate such rights irrespective of whether *we* think the leadership should be changed. (We would advocate such rights in countries where Fourth Internationalist organizations were the ruling parties. Certainly we must do so for Cuba.) Democracy is qualitatively more than the simple right to speak and express one's point of view to the government (a right that exists in Cuba, though not to the extent implied by the SWP leadership). This right is not decisive if workers and peasants cannot organize themselves to change governmental policy; and this is completely illegal in Cuba today.

The SWP's new line on Castroism has led our party to ignore, or cover up, the failings of Cuba on this score. The July 1981 issue of the *International Socialist Review* carried a review of Marta Harnecker's book *Cuba: Dictatorship or Democracy?* by Peter Moore. This was the feature article in the *ISR* that month, and it took a wholly uncritical view of the question of workers' democracy in Cuba, holding it up as a model for how we believe a socialist society should function politically. On the question of the one-party system, Moore developed a rationale which amounts to an apology and justification:

The single-party setup in Cuba arises out of the historical circumstances of the revolution.

Before the Cuban revolution of 1959, Cuba had a number of parties — mostly corrupt capitalist parties like the Democrats and Republicans here.

For the most part, they voiced support for the revolution when the Batista dictatorship fell December 31, 1958. But when the Castro government began to take measures that were in the interest of the great majority — massive land reform, slashes in rent and utility bills, and others — the political organizations polarized.

On the one side, organizations opposed to the revolution turned increasingly to terrorist bombings, assassinations, and sabotage. They saw no alternative since they had no chance of winning majority support. They forged links with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, which had been assigned by Washington to prepare an invasion. These parties were gradually suppressed — an

elementary measure of self-defense that had overwhelming popular support.

On the other hand, the main organizations that supported the revolution drew closer together. Then as now, unity was vitally necessary to prevent the gains of the revolution from being reversed. In 1961 the July 26 Movement, headed by Castro, fused with the Popular Socialist Party and the Revolutionary Student Directorate to form a single party, which later took the name of Communist Party of Cuba.

This party still commands the loyalty of the great majority of Cubans (pp. 5-6).

One feels inclined to ask a few questions of Comrade Moore and the editors of the *ISR* after reading this. Granted that the development of the Cuban CP represented the convergence and regroupment of forces on the Cuban left after the revolution, and also the premise that its emergence as the sole legal party reflected the going over to the counterrevolution of all other currents, still we must ask why *now*, 20 years or so later, the existence of a single-party system is institutionalized *by law* in Cuba. The fact that it must be thus institutionalized refutes, *in and of itself*, the contention that this is a simple objective product of the revolutionary process.

Are there no differentiations of interests among the Cuban masses today which should be legitimately reflected in the free organization of competing political tendencies within the context of the revolution? Is there really complete unanimity among 9 million people over the correct course to follow on domestic and international policy? Is there nobody on the entire island who believes, for example, that the current line of the Cuban government supporting the crackdown on Polish Solidarity should be changed, and would like to organize a political grouping to try to change it? No serious Marxist would claim any of these things. Isn't the institutionalization of the single-party system in Cuba, and the outlawing of tendencies and factions within the Cuban CP a serious danger to the Cuban revolution? Don't these things limit, in the extreme, the ability of all other institutions, such as the assemblies of people's power, to function truly democratically? Don't these facts merit at least some mention in any discussion of workers' democracy in Cuba? For us the answer should be "of course"; but Peter Moore and the *ISR* editors did not think so.

In his report for the majority at the August 1981 SWP convention, Comrade Steve Clark responded to criticisms which had been raised about this article:

In this regard, I think that some of the points comrades made in the Discussion Bulletin and in some branch discussions about the recent *International Socialist Review* article on People's Power in Cuba have some merit. The article would have benefited by further editing to indicate some of the limitations that still exist, and the factors in Cuban and world politics that point toward a continuing positive evolution (*IIDB*, Vol. XVIII #1, p. 17).

At the convention, Comrade Clark and the majority as a whole were asked to enumerate exactly what these limitations were and what should have been changed in the article. To this day, there has been no answer. Instead, in his summary Clark declared:

But Comrade Saunders says that he expects from what I've said in my report, to see a "correction" appear next month on the article in the *International Socialist Review*, "Workers Democracy in Cuba."

Well, he'll be disappointed. What I said, and what I strongly hold, is not that I believe that the general approach of the article was wrong. I believe it was fundamentally correct. (*Ibid.* p.23.)

And no concern about "limitations that still exist" has prevented the *Militant* from referring to Cuba as simply "democratic," without qualifications, since our 1981 convention.

Why has our movement always held up what may seem to be

rather abstract norms of workers' democracy for a healthy workers' state? We do this to educate ourselves and to maintain programmatic clarity. A model workers' democracy has never existed — not even in the USSR before the Stalinist bureaucratization, and certainly not in Cuba today.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Nations

Another area in which changes in our traditional approach began to develop as a result of the new SWP line on Cuba, even before the 1981 convention, was the question of Castro's role in the Movement of Non-Aligned Nations. This organization is an important one for diplomatic maneuvering by the Cuban government, and there is nothing wrong with Cuba's participation on this level. But the way Castro himself relates to this formation indicates that his conception is broader. It reflects his overestimation of the revolutionary, anti-imperialist potential of radical neocolonial bourgeois regimes. This, again, is one of our longstanding theoretical differences with Castroism, which leads to a different assessment of the role of the various social forces involved in the colonial revolution.

In many respects, the SWP leadership has begun to use a terminology which is closer to a Castroist conception than a Trotskyist one. The resolution adopted at the 1981 convention, for example, states: "[The Cuban revolutionists] lead the anti-imperialist wing in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries — a wing that includes the Nicaraguan, Grenadian, and Vietnamese leaderships" (*IIDB*, Vol. XVIII #1, p. 6). Exactly what is meant by this "anti-imperialist wing" of the non-aligned movement? The resolution doesn't tell us; and no definition of it was forthcoming during the discussion leading up to, or at, the convention, despite repeated requests for more clarity. The phrase, "a wing that includes the Nicaraguan, Grenadian, and Vietnamese leaderships," was added in the editing process after the convention, and wasn't in the original draft. But we still need to know who *else* it includes. Castro himself believes that he leads an "anti-imperialist wing" which also includes a large number of neocolonial bourgeois governments. Does the SWP leadership agree with this? The formulation in the resolution not only leaves open this possibility, but strongly implies that it is true.

Placing the adjective "anti-imperialist" in front of any neocolonial bourgeois regime is a serious theoretical mistake. Such regimes are capable of taking specific *actions* against imperialism. Their interests may bring them into *conflict* with imperialism. In such situations revolutionary Marxists support any specific anti-imperialist *measures* which might be taken. But we cannot express any political confidence in the regimes themselves. To do so would be a betrayal of the class struggle in those countries. Describing a government as "anti-imperialist" implies just such confidence.

What is true of individual bourgeois regimes is also true of a diplomatic collective, made up predominantly of such regimes. In the case of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries we are not even dealing with any demonstrable anti-imperialist actions, but simply with support for anti-imperialist resolutions introduced by the Cubans. It is well known that the neocolonial bourgeoisie is frequently willing to register its rhetorical opposition to imperialism, in order to better cover its subservience to it in reality. The majority of the governments that vote for Castro's proposals within the non-aligned movement are acting in exactly this way. We should not grant their actions any credibility by talking about them as part of an "anti-imperialist wing."

Another change that was made in the resolution during the editing process is also significant. In the original draft, the wing of the non-aligned movement led by the Cubans was described as "consistently anti-imperialist." The "consistently" was dropped in the final version, as a result of questions raised about it.

Obviously, calling this a "consistently anti-imperialist wing" of the non-aligned movement is completely indefensible; dropping "consistently" was an improvement, but it doesn't solve the basic underlying problem. And the question remains: how could such a formulation have been introduced in the first place, and be submitted to the party as a whole for discussion even after review by the leading party committees? The answer is that the new orientation toward Castroism is causing comrades in the SWP leadership to begin looking at developments from a Castroist perspective, and not from a Trotskyist one.

The Iranian revolution

The SWP leadership's deviation from our historical program on the role of the neocolonial bourgeoisie has most strongly revealed itself in its approach to the Iranian revolution, and specifically to the Khomeini leadership. This, of course, is a major topic of discussion in and of itself for our international movement, but we should note the connection between this and the Cuba discussion.

The basic feature of the SWP line on Iran has generally been its virtually exclusive concentration on the conflicts between the current IRP government and imperialism, particularly U.S. imperialism. The class struggle inside Iran itself, and the counter-revolutionary role of the IRP and of Khomeini, are either completely ignored, or treated as purely secondary questions. The government's offensive against democratic rights has been downplayed, except when it affects our own comrades. Again, the characterization of "anti-imperialist" has been used to describe the Iranian government over and over in the *Militant* and *Intercontinental Press*. (It should be noted here that the SWP leadership made a self-criticism on this "anti-imperialist" characterization for the Iranian regime at the February-March 1982 plenum of the SWP National Committee. But the press of the SWP still treats the Iranian government as if it *were* truly anti-imperialist even if the term itself is not used.)

Our strategic perspectives in a country like Iran have to combine the struggle against imperialism with the struggle against the native ruling classes. This is particularly true in the context of a profound and thoroughgoing revolutionary crisis. Our primary objective is to point toward the taking of power by the workers and peasants. "Defense of the revolution" cannot be approached as an abstract slogan, encompassing the interests of all the native classes; but must be given the explicit content of "defense of the interests of the toiling masses." And it is precisely this distinction which cannot be made if we look at the Iranian revolution from the one-sided perspective of the "fight against imperialism."

One particular development sharply reveals the methodological inadequacies of the SWP leadership on this question. The March 22, 1982 issue of *Intercontinental Press* reprints an account of a discussion between Castro and members of the Iranian delegation to the conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In the course of this conversation, Castro raises questions on a number of programmatic points regarding the course of developments in Iran: land reform, literacy, health care, etc. In her report on Iran to the February-March 1982 plenum of the SWP National Committee, Comrade Cindy Jaquith noted this discussion, and cited it as proof that Castro understands the revolutionary process in the colonial world (see *International Internal Information Bulletin*, #1 in 1982, p. 14). In fact, however, this discussion demonstrates exactly the opposite of the point which Comrade Jaquith was attempting to make, and clearly reveals how far she herself has begun to depart from a Trotskyist perspective.

Understanding the social tasks of the revolution, though it is essential, is not at all sufficient, and it is not the *primary* problem

for revolutionary Marxists in a development like the Iranian revolution. It is also not the area in which Castroism has revealed its theoretical deficiencies. The key question for the colonial revolution is: which social class is capable of *leading* the revolution and *carrying out* the necessary social tasks? This is the question that Castro does not address in his conversation with the Iranian delegation. It is no coincidence that *exactly* this question reveals the lack of clarity in the SWP leadership's approach to Iran — the need for the class independence of the workers and peasants, and the inability of the Iranian bourgeoisie or any of its representatives to lead the anti-imperialist struggle effectively. Only the proletarian socialist revolution can solve the current economic and political crisis in Iran and gain its independence from imperialism.

Poland

The problem of Stalinism has also been one of our major areas of theoretical disagreement with Castroism. In its writings on Solidarnosc in Poland and Jaruzelski's crackdown, the SWP leadership has blurred the distinction between our position and Castro's.

They have done this in two ways. First, aspects of our analysis which are compatible with Castro's (defense of the workers' state; opposition to imperialist maneuvers) have been artificially elevated, while those which are incompatible (opposition to Stalinism and call for political revolution) are downplayed. Second, the SWP leadership overestimates certain parts of Castro's analysis (for example, his recognition that errors by the PUWP led to the crisis in Poland, a fact which is also acknowledged by Stalinists around the world) — aspects which can be paraded as an implicit critique of Stalinism — while they understate the main thrust of Castro's position (support to the imposition of martial law as necessary for the preservation of socialism).

The SWP leadership has reacted to the Polish events as if the main dividing line is between the interests of imperialism and the Polish workers state. This allows Steve Clark, George Novack, and Larry Seigle to write as follows about the Cuban position on Poland (*Intercontinental Press*, March 1, 1982, p. 162):

The Cubans begin from the correct standpoint of understanding that the overturn of any workers state by imperialism would be a historic blow to the world revolution. They believe firmly in the right and duty of the workers in all the workers states to collectively defend their anticapitalist conquests against any attempts to subvert or reverse them. This places the Cubans on the right side of the class barricades, as opposed to the counterrevolutionary positions of the social democratic and "third camp" forces, who do not defend the workers states against imperialism.

The barricades in Poland have been built not between imperialism and the workers' state, but within the workers' state — between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the working class. The Cuban leadership, even if with criticisms and hesitations, has come down on the side of Jaruzelski. We must be firmly and resolutely on the other side.

The problem of method

The SWP leadership's positions on all of the questions we have discussed so far have one thing in common: an eclectic methodology. A few ideas are extracted from our overall political perspectives which are compatible with Castroism, and likewise, some of Castro's formulations are cited which are compatible with Trotskyism. On this basis our convergence with the Castroist current is treated as an accomplished reality, rather than as an uneven and partial process. No effort is made to examine these areas of agreement, to determine their true scope and their limitations. Their relationship to broader political perspectives is

completely ignored.

This search to find convergence at all costs between our current and Castroism has created a twofold danger: first, a threat of idealizing Castroism — a threat which has become real and manifest in the SWP over the past few years, as we have seen; and second, a danger of abandoning the historic program of Trotskyism. This is also clearly and demonstrably taking place. The positions of the current SWP majority — most notably on Poland and Iran — go quite far in this direction. In this connection we must also note the new view of Leninism put forward by Doug Jenness in his articles in the *International Socialist Review*, November 1981 and June 1982 (I will return to this later).

We can see the beginning of a theoretical revision on these questions. This flows from the SWP leadership's desire to accomplish a convergence without developing an honest and complete view of the Castroist current. Since Castro's world view is not compatible with ours on a number of key questions, the SWP leadership comes under pressure to change *our* perspectives, or at least to interpret them in such a way as to create the least possible conflict with the Cubans.

Our materialist perspectives dictate an uncompromising willingness to deal with both theory and practice in a completely honest manner. Without that, any *consistent* revolutionary action is impossible. If the Fourth International were to adopt the uncritical line on Castroism proposed by the SWP leadership it would seriously threaten to undermine our ability to function as the world party of socialist revolution.

Mass Leninist international

One of the questions where this twofold danger of programmatic unclarity reveals itself most consistently is in the concept of the "mass Leninist international" as it has been developed so far in the discussions in the SWP. Although the exact forms which such an international might take remain rather nebulous, the general political conception is clear: some sort of regroupment between the Castroist current and the Fourth International.

Now, we should all welcome any such development if it could be achieved on a principled political basis. Only hardened sectarians and organizational fetishists could insist that no form of world revolutionary organization is possible or desirable other than the current structure of the Fourth International.

But establishing our *subjective* desire for regroupment cannot even begin to settle the question of whether this is *objectively* possible. Certain key questions must be answered: What political basis exists for regroupment? (The SWP leadership says only that both we and the Castroists have a common approach to the revolutions in Central America and Grenada.) On what program could it be established? What organizational forms might it take? The SWP leadership doesn't provide answers to these questions. The exact perspectives and proposals are left ambiguous. Instead of clarifying its views, the SWP leadership simply labels those who bother to ask such questions as sectarians. This method will never be convincing to serious revolutionists.

The SWP leadership itself refuses to clarify these points, but the logic of their position leads in a particular direction, and their intentions can be uncovered if we do a little excavation. Here is some of what is said about the mass Leninist international in the resolution from the SWP convention:

Major progress toward rebuilding a mass Leninist international depends on new victories in the class struggle that draw together the proletarian vanguards in the three sectors of the world revolution. In the final analysis, it is the vanguard workers of the world who will resolve the leadership crisis of the proletariat.

Along this road there will be regroupments, splits, fusions, and maneuvers of all sorts. We will take initiatives toward centrist groups moving left, leftward-moving sections inside the social-

democratic and Stalinist parties and youth groups, unions oriented toward class combat, and revolutionary currents originating outside our own ranks.

In Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada, the place for those who share our ideas is as loyal builders of the Cuban Communist Party, FSLN, and New Jewel Movement. These parties, which we consider fellow revolutionary organizations, have shown in action that they are the leaders of the working people in their countries. Our aim is to collaborate with them in every way possible to further our shared goal of consolidating and extending the socialist revolution in this hemisphere and developing a strategy to achieve this on a world scale.

We are all necessarily shaped by our own origins and experiences. It is out of the accelerating class struggle itself — against imperialist domination, capitalist exploitation, and the oppression by the bureaucratic castes — that the views and capacities of each will be tested and differences resolved in life (*IIDB*, Vol. XVIII #1, p. 8).

Several ideas emerge from these paragraphs. And following the general methodology of the SWP leadership, they say little that is wrong taken by itself. But taken as a whole, and combined with what is *left out*, the SWP resolution presents a completely incorrect line.

The first two paragraphs are general historical perspectives which no Leninist could possibly disagree with. Our dispute with the SWP majority is *not* over such generalities, but rather over a particular immediate question — whether their new line on Castroism is a correct *application* of this general outlook.

The heart of the problem is in the third paragraph, which deals with the specific point in dispute. So let's examine this in some detail: "In Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada, the place for those who share our ideas is as loyal builders of the Cuban Communist Party, FSLN, and New Jewel Movement." Okay, no argument here, except that we will discover as we go along that we are being thrown a ringer with those two little words, "loyal builders." One of the basic requirements of Marxist terminology is that it be used precisely. But the SWP leadership *avoids* being precise, and instead writes things in such a way that comrades can interpret them differently, and those with conflicting views can all vote for the same resolution. In the discussion on this *particular* document, comrades who defended it gave two distinct, and contradictory, explanations of what is meant by being "loyal builders." We will examine later what perspective is actually being presented here.

"These parties, which we consider to be fellow revolutionary organizations, have shown in action that they are the leaders of the working people in their own countries." Again, who can disagree? And the fact that these organizations are the tested and proven leaderships in their own countries dictates to us the orientation in the first sentence — that the place for those who share our views is as loyal builders of them (assuming a correct understanding of "loyal builders"). But here too we have a lack of clarity. Something is left out. What exactly is meant by "fellow revolutionary organizations"? This is a concept that can be given many varied interpretations. To what extent do we have programmatic agreement with these fellow revolutionary organizations, and to what extent do we have basic differences? What approach do we take toward resolving our differences? Aren't these key questions that should be addressed in any serious discussion of a mass Leninist international? Why are questions of program studiously avoided by the SWP leadership in this resolution? But be patient; we will begin to see the answer to this puzzle as we examine the next sentence:

"Our aim is to collaborate with them in every way possible to further our shared goal of consolidating and extending the socialist revolution in this hemisphere and developing a strategy to achieve this on a world scale." Here, in a nutshell — and in a

rare candid form — is the SWP leadership's entire perspective. This is what the new line on Castroism and the mass Leninist international boils down to. As with everything else, of course, a great deal hinges on how one defines key terms — in this case the word "collaborate." "Our *aim* (note here the use of the singular) is to collaborate with" the Castroist current. Is the collaboration we seek one which involves the development of programmatic clarity with these fellow revolutionary organizations? If so, then there is general agreement on this perspective in the Fourth International.

But this is *not* the kind of collaboration that the SWP leadership has in mind. Their idea is considerably more one-sided; and this is why the question of our programmatic differences with Castroism is completely absent from the 1981 resolution of the SWP. This is also why we have begun to adapt *our* program to Castroism on several major points. There is simply no room for establishing programmatic clarity if we set ourselves the *exclusive* aim of collaborating in this way with the Castroist current. The theoretical questions that divide us from them can only create unwelcome difficulties in such a project. These differences are what have actually been the biggest obstacles to our collaboration in the past, not any "sectarianism" on our part. There is no indication that they are any less an obstacle at the present time. Therefore, in order to pursue their *particular* version of collaboration, the SWP leadership is *compelled* to either ignore or downplay the weaknesses of Castroism, or else to modify our own program to avoid a conflict.

The failure of the SWP's proposed line on Castroism to take up programmatic problems has created contradictions that are revealed by the second half of the sentence we are currently examining as well. The resolution describes our "shared goal" of "consolidating and extending the socialist revolution in this hemisphere, and developing a strategy to achieve this on a world scale." It is exactly in this area — the extension of the socialist revolution on a world scale — where the theoretical limitations of Castroism are most profound and serious. Castro's illusions in Stalinism and in the neocolonial bourgeoisie fundamentally undermine the development of an effective strategy for the extension of the world revolution. He has never come to grips theoretically with the problems of the proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries, not to mention political revolution in the workers' states. A simple subjective desire for the extension of the revolution is not, and cannot be, adequate evidence of a convergence unless there is also programmatic agreement about *how* to extend it. Today we agree with Castro about the need to aid and defend the revolutions in Nicaragua, Grenada, El Salvador, and Guatemala; and also, to a large extent, on how to do this. On these questions we can, indeed, collaborate and further our shared goals. But we do not need the new line on Castroism proposed by the SWP to do so, since this is precisely the course being followed by our entire international movement. No, what the SWP leadership is proposing goes far beyond such basic tasks; yet if we go beyond this sphere the programmatic and theoretical obstacles loom up once again. Any approach which does not take such problems into account can only lead our movement off course.

An interesting question is raised by the formulation that we share the "goal of . . . developing a strategy to achieve [the socialist revolution] on a world scale." The major problem for the Fourth International has not been "developing a strategy" for socialist revolution, but *applying* the strategy that has been developed historically since the time of Marx and Engels; a strategy embodied in basic programmatic documents like the *Communist Manifesto* and the *Transitional Program*. To be sure, this is a living program, which must be constantly tested, renewed, enriched, and expanded in the course of the actual class struggle as

it unfolds. But there is a big difference between doing these things and "developing a strategy," as projected by the SWP resolution, which implies that our old conceptions are inadequate and something new should be "developed."

Here again, and quite clearly this time, we see revealed a serious questioning of our traditional theoretical and programmatic conceptions. Of course, no law rules out such a questioning. But if that is the course the SWP leadership has embarked upon, as it seems to be, then their obligation is to present their case honestly and openly to the International, and explain exactly what it is they propose to replace our old strategy with.

Before leaving this section of the SWP resolution, it is also worth taking a close look at the last of the four paragraphs we quoted above: "We are all necessarily shaped . . ." Once again, this is characterized by its one-sidedness. "It is out of the accelerating class struggle itself . . . that the views and capacities of each will be tested and differences resolved in life." How can a Leninist stop at this point? We don't bow down before the objective factor, the class struggle, and attribute to it some all-powerful ability to "resolve differences in life." Differences can only be resolved in life if the *subjective* factor is also part of our equation. This means the necessary struggle for ideas, for program, integrally connected with the class struggle. And this is where the historical program of revolutionary Marxism, of the Fourth International, is so crucially important. This program does not arise spontaneously out of the class struggle, as all past experience testifies. It must be fought for and won by revolutionists. Understanding the material roots of our differences with Castroism is valuable and necessary. But it is a serious political error to act as if, since the errors have material roots, they can be left out of our calculations, left to the class struggle to "resolve in life."

We do not and cannot cling to particular organizational forms or structures when a new opportunity arises for joining with fresh forces to build a world party of socialist revolution. But the one thing we *do* cling to is our historical program. If someone proposes unity to us on the condition that we renounce or abandon some aspect of our program, our answer must be polite but firm: "If there are serious programmatic disagreements, they cannot be swept aside. Let's discuss them frankly and try to convince each other, while at the same time joining together in action on those things we agree on. Only on this basis is revolutionary unity possible." We don't insist that any organization or party we are part of must have our entire program. But we do insist on maintaining our own conceptions and fighting for their adoption.

In our discussion about the new mass Leninist international before the 1981 SWP convention, comrades who supported the majority line offered an analogy with the Third International in the 1920s when Lenin and Trotsky attempted to bring together a broad array of heterogeneous forces in a common revolutionary organization. If such a development were to occur around the Central American revolution, as it did around the Russian Revolution, it would be a tremendous step forward for the international working class. But just as Lenin and Trotsky built and participated in the Third International understanding that their *primary* task was the clarification of program — the transformation of that heterogeneous international into a homogeneous Marxist party — so would we have to participate in any heterogeneous revolutionary international that might develop today. That's why the perspective presented by the SWP leadership — which ignores, downplays, and even revises vital programmatic questions while promoting an ill-defined concept of a new mass Leninist international — is extremely dangerous for our world movement.

Steve Clark explains "loyal builders"

If we need further proof that the SWP leadership is projecting a line of subordinating our program in an attempt to forge unity with Castroism, then we can take a look at the discussion around the meaning of the term "loyal builders" to describe the political relationship of Trotskyists to the Cuban CP, FSLN, and New Jewel Movement. In preparation for the 1981 SWP convention, Comrade George Breitman proposed a series of amendments to the section of the resolution concerning Cuba and Castroism. Among his proposed changes was the dropping of the term "loyal builders." In the course of the discussion on this, the real political meaning of that formulation came to light.

Steve Clark led the way for the SWP Political Committee with an article entitled "In Reply to Comrade Breitman's Proposed Amendments." Here is what he had to say on this subject:

For our part, as the resolution says, we advocate joining the FSLN, not forming a separate party or a faction or a tendency within it.

We do not have the same program on some important questions as the FSLN, NJM, or Cuban CP. But we do not consider these organizations to be alien to our party, or our world movement and our goals. We do not consider them centrist obstacles to resolving the crisis of world proletarian leadership, but instead the first revolutionary forces to stand at the head of governments for nearly half a century.

Our task is not, *in any sense*, to build an opposition to them or inside them (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 37 #16, p. 10, emphasis added).

We must weigh carefully the significance of these paragraphs. In what kinds of organization could we possibly participate while "not in any sense build(ing) an opposition," not even a *tendency*, to argue for a change of line on specific questions? This would be correct only in a political current that has a clear, complete, and consistent program and theory capable of leading the international proletariat to victory over imperialism. Is Castroism a tendency with such a capacity?

The practical policy of the SWP leadership over the last few years; the line projected at the 1981 SWP convention; and the many other statements by SWP leaders on Cuba are only consistent if they believe that Castroism *has* developed a complete program for world revolution. This is the crux of their disagreement with the majority of the Fourth International. Of course, Castroism has the *potential* for developing such a program, and on certain important questions it has moved in the right direction. But it is completely incorrect to substitute a potential *future* reality for the *actual* reality that exists today. "It is far more dangerous to confuse the present and future tenses in politics than in grammar" (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 48).

Of course, Steve Clark acknowledges that "we do not have the same program on some important questions as the FSLN, NJM, or Cuban CP." But such ritualistic affirmations of our programmatic differences, which can be found sprinkled throughout the writings and speeches of the SWP leadership, have about the same relationship to a serious Marxist analysis as a fig leaf has to a pair of trousers. At no time is any real content put into such statements. Clark doesn't tell us what his perspective is for dealing with these disagreements.

The proposal of Comrade Clark that we not be in opposition *in any sense* is wrong. We will have to be in opposition in some sense, in some political sense, to Castroism no matter what organizational forms our relationship to that current might take. We will have to oppose the wrong aspects of Castro's program and theory.

But is it possible that Clark's explanation during the precon-

vention discussion of what he means by "loyal builders" was perhaps poorly formulated, not thought through, an isolated error? Unfortunately this cannot be true. The same concept was repeated in his report to the convention for the Political Committee:

What is decisive is our stance to the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenadian revolutionists. We approach them as fellow revolutionary parties. Whatever our political differences, and there are differences, we say that Trotskyists can be loyal builders of these organizations. Our aim is not to build an opposition to them and to their leaderships — either inside or outside these organizations, but to listen and learn, to collaborate with them, and in the process to advance further — in program and practice — along our line of march (*IIDB*, Vol. XVIII #1, p. 20).

Here we see the same counterposition between "loyal builders" and "opposition." And in his summary, too, Clark returned to this idea, although with a slightly different twist:

Comrade Bloom asks if we approach these organizations as an opposition in any sense. The answer is no. This doesn't mean that we approach them uncritically. One must be critical, in the Marxist sense, if one is serious as well as loyal. But we don't approach them as oppositionists (*IIDB*, Vol. XVIII, #1, p. 23).

Comrade Clark clearly develops for us not just the *logic* of the current SWP line, but its *explicit intent*. We must demonstrate our loyalty to Castroism. In doing this it is all right to be a little critical, to raise some of our own ideas in a friendly way. But we will apparently have to be critical as individuals, since we cannot even go so far as to organize a *tendency* — i.e., an organized grouping to advocate a change of policy. That would mean organizing an opposition, which according to Clark would not be loyal. (For the SWP leadership this would seem to be the appropriate approach not only for Trotskyists in the Cuban CP, FSLN, and NJM, but also for our forces in the "new mass Leninist international" as well.) These conceptions, if carried to their logical conclusion, can only be described as a perspective for the liquidation of the Trotskyist movement into Castroism.

In the resolution on Cuba adopted by the IEC in May 1981, a different and considerably better formulation on the political relationship between Trotskyism and Castroism appears:

In Nicaragua revolutionary Marxists must be fully part of any project of the FSLN to construct a revolutionary party and, in this framework, they put forward proposals for developing and consolidating the revolution. In El Salvador they join the FMLN and in Guatemala they integrate themselves in the organizations leading the struggle against the pro-imperialist dictatorship. They carry out this orientation as loyal revolutionary militants. At the same time as they respect the organizational framework in which they operate they struggle for the program of the Fourth International and they group together its supporters (*Intercontinental Press*, Oct. 19, 1981, p. 1030).

There is no way to get around the fact that a relatively small grouping of Trotskyists, immersed in a Castroist milieu, will have to maintain some form of organizational identity, including links to the international Trotskyist movement, if they are to be able to adequately clarify the necessary points of program and theory. Only comrades who believe that such a clarification is unnecessary, or not particularly important, or perhaps even undesirable can reject this perspective.

This dispute is *not* over whether Fourth Internationalists, participating as members of the Cuban CP, NJM, FSLN, FMLN, or new mass Leninist international can be loyal participants in the process of building such organizations. It is over whether we can accept the particular *redefinition* of loyalty presented to us by the SWP leadership; a redefinition, it should be noted, that is in striking contrast to the traditional Leninist approach.

According to Steve Clark, any *opposition*, even to the incorrect *policies* of these currents, is an act of *disloyalty*. This is a very dangerous idea for the leadership of a revolutionary party to begin to develop. All of our history and traditions tell us that it is not only a *right*, but at times a *duty* for a *loyal* member of a Bolshevik organization to express *opposition*, and even to *organize* an opposition grouping, if necessary, to correct mistaken positions of the party. Far from being an expression of disloyalty, such action is the most profound expression of the confidence of loyal members in their organization.

Even when viewed on a purely practical level, organizing a tendency struggle which aims to change the party program reflects loyalty not only to the party, but even to its leadership as well — since it expresses confidence in the ability of that leadership to change its perspectives. And on the level of a faction, which seeks a change of leadership, a principled struggle still expresses the deepest kind of loyalty *to the party as a whole*. Comrades should consider whether Trotsky's organization of the Left *Opposition* wasn't the greatest reflection of his *loyalty* to the Bolshevik party and the Communist International.

Steve Clark rejects this Bolshevik understanding of loyalty. To him loyalty means simply, "to listen and learn, to collaborate . . ." This he describes as "our aim" in relation to the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenadian revolutionists. When this aim is *counterposed* by Clark and the SWP leadership to the clarification of theory and program — which today requires an organized opposition to the weaknesses of the Castroist approach — it is dangerously incorrect.

Our loyal opposition on the level of program and ideology must be the other side of our loyal collaboration with Castroism in the many areas where we have agreement. The approach of the SWP leadership clearly abandons this conception, and that is why it should be rejected.

The development of the SWP line

In 1979 the SWP convention adopted a resolution on Cuba which, on the whole, represented a much more modest appraisal than the perspectives which the party leadership is now proposing for the Fourth International. In fact, the general line of the 1979 resolution, despite some differences of emphasis, was essentially the same as that presented in the 1981 IEC resolution on the subject. Castroism was characterized as a revolutionary current, though one which was not revolutionary Marxist in the sense of having a complete and adequate theoretical understanding. Cuba itself was correctly recognized to be a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations. Although a political revolution was not called for, serious limitations were acknowledged to exist in the area of workers' democracy, and these were seen as posing a danger to the future course of the revolution.

Today, the SWP leadership would repudiate these, and other, aspects of its 1979 position. One has quite a different attitude if Cuba is, indeed, a model of workers' democracy, or if Castroism can be characterized as revolutionary Marxism without any qualifications, as has been done in *The Militant* and *IP*. Steve Clark made this change explicit in his report to the 1981 convention: "But we've learned enough since [1979] to say that if this resolution and report were put up for a vote again here at this convention in 1981 against our current resolution, we would vote against them." (What is particularly interesting about this statement is that it was the first acknowledgement by any member of the central party leadership that there was anything new or different in their current approach. Throughout the entire pre-convention discussion period the new positions were defended as representing simple continuity with, and an organic development of the 1979 resolution. Many comrades who voted with the majority in 1981 did so on the basis of this alleged continuity.)

It will be important to keep in mind, throughout the international discussion, that what the SWP is proposing is *not* simply an extension and development of our traditional view of the Cuban leadership as developed by Joseph Hansen and others. That would require a balanced approach and an appreciation of contradictory realities. The new SWP line is a radical *break* with this approach, and if it is to be debated with any degree of honesty, it must be debated on the basis of the need for such a break.

The impact of the Nicaraguan revolution

The beginning of the theoretical shift by the SWP leadership away from its 1979 resolution on Castroism coincides with the victory and development of the revolution in Nicaragua. The Sandinista leadership is ideologically and historically quite close to the Cubans. Their ability to lead the overthrow of Somoza, take political power in their own hands, and begin to use the government to defend the interests of the workers and peasants all reinforce our assessment of the profoundly revolutionary side of the Castroist current.

But all of this poses nothing new for us in a theoretical sense. The basic understanding of this phenomenon has been part of our theoretical arsenal since the Cuban revolution itself. And the victory of Sandinism in Nicaragua is completely comprehensible within that framework.

From a scientific point of view, both the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions must be classified in the same category. Nicaragua represents a continuation of the process begun by Cuba. It is a revolution led by forces which are non-Stalinist, and which in fact developed in struggle *against* Stalinist conceptions of peaceful coexistence and class collaboration. Like the Castro leadership, the FSLN bases itself firmly on the mobilization of the workers and peasants, and seeks to defend their interests *against* those of imperialism and the native capitalist and land-owning classes. But also like the Cubans, the Sandinista leadership has accomplished all of this despite an ideological framework that is incomplete, and lacks certain theoretical conceptions necessary for a rounded assessment of the international revolutionary process.

Of course, to say all of this is not to say that we have nothing new to learn from a study of the revolution in Nicaragua; nor is it an assertion that Sandinism in 1979 was identical to Castroism 20 years earlier. The Sandinistas stand on the experience of the Cubans and therefore begin with many advantages. The Nicaraguan revolution starts out with a much better understanding of the class struggle, and the Cuban workers' state exists as a model for the solution of Nicaragua's remaining social contradictions. (That is one reason why we can be so confident in the ability of the Sandinistas to chart a road forward.) And just as we must study the individual characteristics of the social overturns in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, Korea, and Vietnam — each of which has rich lessons for us despite the fact that we classify them all together as deformed revolutions led by Stalinist parties — so must we take cognizance of the specific aspects of the Nicaraguan and Grenadan experiences to enrich our theoretical appreciation of the broad variety of possibilities for a Cuban-type revolutionary development.

The SWP leadership's line — by implication and at times explicitly — rejects this view of Nicaragua as an extension of the process begun by the Cuban revolution. It asserts that a *qualitative leap* has occurred that calls for a radically new perspective. Exceptional qualities of revolutionary consciousness and theoretical understanding are now attributed to the Cubans and Nicaraguans — far beyond anything our movement concluded as a result of the Cuban revolution itself, and far beyond anything that can be justified on the basis of the actual development of events in Nicaragua.

It would be a mistake for us to begin to draw too-sweeping theoretical conclusions as a result of the Nicaraguan experience. That victory, like the Cuban one, took place under exceptional circumstances — the total and utter decay of the Somoza regime, the complete inability of the oppositional bourgeoisie to pose their own alternative, the terrific resistance of the Nicaraguan masses, and the paralysis of the U.S. imperialist military machine as a result of the "Vietnam syndrome." All of this allowed a leadership with an incomplete program to lead and consolidate the victory of the workers and peasants. *In this sense* the Nicaraguan revolution, like the Cuban one is a continuation of the whole series of revolutions since World War II which we have characterized as part of the "long detour" (away from the classical variant of urban proletarian revolution) resulting from the post-war economic boom in the imperialist countries.

Steve Clark takes specific exception to this view of the Nicaraguan revolution in his report to the 1981 convention:

This is not part of the "long detour." The "long detour" was part of the renewal of the world socialist revolution after 1943, yes — but one characterized by such things as Stalinist misleaderships and predominantly non-proletarian forces. The Chinese revolution was carried out under the Stalinist Mao leadership at the head of a peasant army. The Yugoslav leadership, after breaking with Moscow, veered off toward imperialism and capitulated to Washington by supporting its intervention in Korea.

The Cuban revolution, while still exhibiting aspects of the "detour" — such as the advocacy of rural guerrilla strategy in its early years — was above all a *break* from the detour. Here was a socialist revolution led by a non-Stalinist leadership, a leadership that consciously mobilized the Cuban workers and its allies to take the factories, to deepen the socialist course of the revolution, to defend it arms in hand, to extend it.

The Nicaraguan revolution, far from being another "long detour revolution," is confirmation of the fundamental aspect of our epoch — the epoch of proletarian revolutions (*IIDB*, Vol. XVIII, #1, p. 18).

This passage provides a window on the thinking of the SWP leadership. It demonstrates once again Clark's one-sided view of the Nicaraguan revolution, and complements this with a one-sided and undialectical view of the "long detour." (We will not deal here with Clark's oversimplification of the early development of the Cuban revolution.) Cuba did represent a break from the previous manifestations of the long detour (a point we have always made), but Clark exaggerates when he says that it was this "above all" (an idea which is in contradiction with what we have written in the past). The correct way to view the Cuban revolution is as both a break with, and *at the same time* a continuation of, the process of the detour. This is a contradiction that exists in the process of the Cuban revolution itself.

We cannot view the detour in a rigid and schematic way, but rather as a process. The Cuban revolution marks the beginning of the end of that process. Nicaragua demonstrates a continuation along the road away from the detour and back to the classical variant of urban, proletarian revolution. This is true both in terms of the role played by the urban masses in the insurrection itself, and in terms of the level of understanding on the part of the FSLN leadership. But at the same time Nicaragua is also a part of the process of the detour. It is essential to understand both these aspects in order to orient ourselves correctly. Steve Clark and the SWP leadership want us to recognize only one, because to recognize the other would completely deflate their new schema.

We can look at another side of this question as well. If we accept for the moment Steve Clark's assertion that the Cuban revolution was "above all a *break* from the detour," where does this lead us in the current discussion? If Cuba represented above all a break, and Nicaragua is "confirmation" of this break, then they

must still be viewed as two parts of the same process. So why is it that the theoretical concepts our movement developed to deal with the first 20 years of the Cuban revolution are found by the SWP leadership to be so inadequate to deal with the Nicaraguan revolution? Looked at in this way, the line of argument presented here by Steve Clark simply demonstrates again the fact that the Nicaraguan revolution has thrown the SWP leadership into a theoretical crisis, that it views this revolution as demanding some *qualitatively* new theoretical explanations. In order to maintain consistency, however, they have to begin to project these new theories back onto the Cuban revolution, and claim that our past understanding of Castroism has been incorrect and sectarian.

The Leninism discussion

One of the most serious demonstrations of this theoretical crisis of the SWP leadership is its new view of Lenin's concept of the Russian Revolution, presented by Doug Jenness in his articles entitled "How Lenin Saw the Russian Revolution," (*International Socialist Review*, November 1981) and, "Our Political Continuity with Bolshevism," (*ISR*, June 1982). The main thesis of these articles is that Lenin's understanding of the class character of the Russian revolution was continuous from 1905 on, and that his conception of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" armed the Bolshevik party theoretically for the events of 1917.

This represents a serious revision of the traditional theoretical heritage of Trotskyism, as developed by the founders of our movement and maintained for the last 54 years. Lenin broke theoretically with the "democratic dictatorship" slogan in 1917, and had to rearm the Bolsheviks through the April Theses. What was on the agenda in Russia was the proletariat, and not the democratic (that is, bourgeois) dictatorship.

We have already seen how the SWP leadership has attempted to reconcile in an unacceptable manner the differences between our current and Castroism in the realm of practical politics. The Jenness article represents an attempt to do the same thing in the realm of theory and history. And just as on the practical side, such theoretical acrobatics will inevitably require a continued abandonment of a Trotskyist program and an increasing adoption of a Castroist one.

Castroism has failed to come to grips theoretically with the question of permanent revolution, which has led to illusions in individual bourgeois figures in the semicolonial countries. In general, Castro accepts the possibility of an "anti-imperialist" national bourgeoisie. To be sure, this theoretical weakness did not prevent the Castro leadership from empirically finding the correct course in Cuba; and their own experience, plus that of the Nicaraguans and Grenadans (who also seem likely to follow this road), plus other events, like the Vietnamese revolution, the defeat in Chile, etc., have all combined to give the Cubans a much better understanding of the relationship between the national and socialist revolutions now than they had in the past. Nevertheless, it remains incomplete, and dangerously so.

The theoretical dividing line was drawn decisively on this question for the Marxist movement by the experience of the Russian revolution in 1917. In his April Theses Lenin decisively rejected his previous conception — that the tremendous backwardness of Russia would require a period of capitalist development, and the solution of bourgeois-democratic tasks under a bourgeois republic — pushed forward by the uncompromising struggles, and established under the leadership of the workers and peasants — which would set the stage for the socialist revolution. Instead, beginning in April, Lenin asserted that the tasks of bourgeois development and the satisfaction of bourgeois-democratic demands could *only* be accomplished in Russia under the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., by the *socialist* revolution. This was identi-

cal to the idea of "permanent revolution," which had been advanced by Trotsky since 1905. Later, after the experience of the Chinese revolution in 1927, Trotsky generalized his theory more broadly to include all of the underdeveloped countries, and this has been a basic theoretical heritage of revolutionary Marxism ever since.

Now Doug Jenness, 65 years after the Russian Revolution, wants to rewrite this history. To avoid discussing our Trotskyist theoretical views with the Cubans, since they might get in the way of being "loyal builders" of the Castroist parties, he has set out on a course of simply denying that those views exist. Comrades should stop and consider the seriousness of this — what it has always meant in the past when a political current begins to rewrite its own history to satisfy some perceived conjunctural goal. The articles presented by Doug Jenness should be a warning sign to all comrades who agree with the SWP leadership's proposed line on Castroism to stop and take a look at where this is taking them. They should reconsider their course.

The Jenness thesis is *not* simply a clever way of smuggling in our concept of permanent revolution through the back door, using Lenin, whom the Castroists accept as an authority, rather than Trotsky, to present the same ideas. By denying a change of position by Lenin in 1917, Jenness makes it impossible to clarify the necessary theoretical distinctions between the pre-1917 Lenin (democratic dictatorship) and the post-1917 Lenin (April Theses). But it is exactly this theoretical distinction which is essential for us if we are to discuss the *content* of permanent revolution, even if we call it by a different name, and never bring up Trotsky's contribution.

Jenness's theoretical efforts will do nothing to improve the Castroists' inadequate understanding of this question; but they will go a long way toward moving us away from a Trotskyist one. The end result of this process, if it is pursued, can only be the theoretical disarming of our world movement and its reconciliation with the half-way notions of Castroism on this crucially important aspect of the international revolution.

Conclusion

The SWP leadership presents this discussion as if it hinged around whether or not the Fourth International should orient itself actively to Castroism and the revolutionary leaderships in Nicaragua and Grenada. It presents itself as the prime advocate of such an orientation, and denounces everyone who disagrees with its *particular* perspectives as sectarians who are trying to hold onto some organizational fetish called the Fourth International. But this way of posing the question is completely false, and can only have the effect of poisoning the atmosphere for a serious and genuine discussion.

There is no serious disagreement in the International about the importance of the Nicaraguan and Grenadan revolutions; the significance of the Cubans' support for these struggles; or the need to orient our sections politically toward such developments. Every section is engaged actively in Central America solidarity work, and is closely following events in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Grenada, and Cuba itself.

This debate is not over *whether* to orient ourselves to these developments, but *how* to do so. Those of us who oppose the SWP's new line, and counterpose to it an appreciation of the history and traditions of the Fourth International, do so *not* out of organizational fetishism, but rather out of an understanding of the need to maintain our *programmatic* heritage. This is a "fetish" that we refuse to lightly discard.

The SWP line, it should be clear, presents an orientation toward Castroism that will, if carried to the end, lead to the abandonment of that programmatic heritage, and in fact has already made serious inroads into it. It asserts that Castroism has suc-

ceeded in leading real revolutions, and placing itself at the head of truly mass movements (which is correct), and then proceeds (in an incorrect way) to counterpose this to the Fourth International, which remains an organization of propaganda groups. The SWP line idealizes the political capacities of Castroism, and ignores, or even denies, its weaknesses. And it attempts to blur every disagreement and programmatic distinction. This approach must be firmly rejected.

A correct orientation toward Castroism requires a real recognition of its programmatic weaknesses, and of the need to win over the Castroists to a correct revolutionary Marxist perspective in these areas. That is why we must adhere tenaciously to the program of the Fourth International, which is the only program capable of leading the working class and its allies in all three sectors of the world revolution — the colonial and neocolonial countries, the imperialist countries, and the deformed and degenerated workers states — forward to victory, no matter what organizational forms and maneuvers we may go through. Our Cuban, Grenadan, and Nicaraguan comrades will be won to that program

through a three-fold process: First, through their continued experience in leading forward the revolutions in their own countries, and in relating to revolutionary developments in all parts of the world; second, through an ongoing process of discussing ideas and theory with us as we work together on common projects when possible, and as we discuss our differences in a comradely but serious and correct way when we cannot work together; and third, by our own example, by the successes which the sections and sympathizing groups of the Fourth International attain through the Leninist strategy of party-building, through our active involvement and growing influence in the mass struggles of the working class and its allies. This is the *only* perspective that can lead us forward; only this holds any hope for a *real* construction of a mass Leninist international. Only those who have little confidence in the revolutionary capacities of Castroism, or little confidence in the historic program of the Fourth International can reject this approach.

September 8, 1982

Counter Report on Poland

by Nat Weinstein

The following document rounds out the defense of Trotskyism presently under attack by the Usec. minority. It is an unedited text of a report presented to the Socialist Workers Party National Committee Plenum, February 27-March 4, 1982.

It, unfortunately, was excluded from *International Internal Information Bulletin* No. 2 in 1982 entitled: "Class-Struggle Approach to Solidarity with Polish Workers." The title-page description of the contents of the *IIIB* reads:

"This bulletin follows chronologically the evolution of the discussion of the Socialist Workers Party's approach to solidarity with the Polish workers since the December 1981 crackdown. It concludes with reports adopted and rejected by the SWP National Committee at its February 27-March 4, 1982, plenum" (my emphasis). — N.W.

* * *

The January 29 PC [Political Committee] letter¹ to the Northern California Bay Area District Committee signed by Comrade Larry Seigle sharply intensifies the challenge to our traditional position in favor of political revolution against the bureaucratic dictatorship strangling the Polish and other workers' states. The PC had previously developed the position that all demonstrations outside Poland inevitably become counterrevolutionary because of factors that are at the present time insurmountable. According to the PC, demonstrations are inexorably doomed to be anti-communist, not only in San Francisco, Chicago and New York, but also those in France; and it seems everywhere else outside of Poland.

The January 29 letter reaffirms this line and goes further.

I pointed out in my December 25, 1981 letter² to the PC that this position "amounts to abstract support for Polish workers with no real proposals for action to implement it." I went on to say that, "This contradictory methodology which at bottom sees the struggle in Poland as objectively progressive, but sees action in support, here, as objectively reactionary, cannot be maintained for long. The logic of this inconsistent line leads toward opposition to the political revolution in Poland."

On page 8³ of the PC's letter this is characterized as a "slandereous accusation." But on page 9⁴, the PC carries the logic of its inconsistent position a step farther. In two consecutive paragraphs the PC falsely argues, first, that the right-wing slogan "Anarchy for All Poland!" is "In a similar category" to the slogan "All Power to Solidarity!" The PC letter then goes on to unabashedly assert:

The Stalinists accuse Solidarity of preparing for a seizure of power. In response, Solidarity has unconditionally denied this accusation, branding it a slander. If anyone in Poland had carried such a slogan as "All Power to Solidarity!" at a workers' action there, they would have immediately been told — immediately and physically — that the slogan amounts to a provocation. It is no less

true in this country. Comrade Weinstein's slogan is a provocation.⁵

Aside from the tone, most noteworthy in this passage is that the one slogan selected out for attack by the PC is one that unambiguously sums up and states the perspective of political revolution.

Even if the slogan "All Power to Solidarity!" were to be considered tactically wrong in Poland today, by no stretch of the imagination could it be seen as harmful to the Polish workers in support rallies here in the U.S. — except, of course, to those opposed to the political revolution in Poland.

I will come back to the tactical question of which slogans pointing to governmental power may be applicable today in Poland.

The PC's equation of the counterrevolutionary slogan "Anarchy for All Poland!" with the clearly revolutionary slogan "All Power to Solidarity!," however, tends to underscore the warning I gave, that the PC considers slanderous. I repeat the warning: The rationale given by the Stalinists and others for opposing demonstrations and strikes and the organization of an independent trade union in Poland; and the rationale given by the PC for opposing support demonstrations elsewhere in the world, are in essence the same. They both hinge on the premise that despite the intentions of the participants, these actions can only serve an anti-communist end. It is a fact of political reality that such inconsistencies rarely can be juggled for long! This is a fact — not a slander!

The PC's opposition to the slogan "All Power to Solidarity!" is all the more strange since they do not point to any slogans they consider correct and appropriate. Nor do they propose a substitute for the particular slogan they view so harmful to the Polish workers.

In the present context of the PC's shifting position on Trotsky's contributions to revolutionary Marxism the objection to the slogan "All Power to Solidarity!" is suspect. It serves to water down the content of the call for political revolution in Poland. The PC objection to the slogan seems to challenge the traditional view that political revolution requires smashing the bureaucratic regimes in the degenerated and deformed workers states and replacing them with soviet type institutions.

Exactly what form the political regime of workers democracy will take will, of course, be decided by history. In any case, the slogan "All Power to Solidarity!" clearly and unambiguously expresses our traditional view of political revolution — especially when accompanied by other appropriate slogans such as "Socialism Yes — Stalinism No!" and "There Can Be No Socialism Without Democracy!"

In contrast to the ambiguous and contradictory stance of the PC, the United Secretariat document "Political Revolution and Counter Revolution in Poland" (see *IPI* February 15, 1982) states: ". . . the generals and apparatchiks [in Poland] insistently accuse the working class of wanting to 'seize power.' This charge is by itself a denunciation of the bureaucracy's expropriation of political power." The Usec. resolution goes on to point out that a division existed within Solidarity over this question of

1. See *IIIB* No. 2 in 1982, May 1982.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *IIIB* No. 2 in 1982, page 9.

4. *IIIB* No. 2 in 1982, page 10.

5. *IIIB* No. 2 in 1982, page 10.

power: "On the one hand, among the cadres of the movement, the process of becoming aware of the imperative necessity of preparing a central battle and putting the movement forward as a contender for power was developing." The document goes on to point to an opposing tendency backed by the Catholic hierarchy based on ". . . a strategy of 'self-limitation' of the movement."

Two things emerge here: 1. The question of power has been posed; who shall rule in Poland — the working-class majority or the minority caste of bureaucrats? And, 2. That a division exists within the ranks of the workers over this key question of revolutionary strategy.

Is there any doubt that the state of war declared against the Polish working class on December 13 by the bureaucratic dictatorship was precipitated by the decision made by the leaders of Solidarity to demand free elections? That this demand points toward the wresting of all power from the hands of the despots? Is there any question *now* that the illusions among Polish workers of peaceful coexistence between them and the bureaucracy has been given a death blow by the Stalinist bureaucratic repression? Isn't the substantial question in Poland indeed the question of the consolidation of all power in the hands of the workers and their class institutions?

Of course, the danger of Soviet bureaucratic intervention must be considered tactically by the revolutionary workers of Poland. But that tactical question is *subordinate* to the overthrow of the bureaucratic caste in favor of workers political power. Isn't the decisive question in Poland today ultimately reducible to which regime shall prevail: the political dictatorship of the workers or that of the bureaucrats?

Listen to this testimony by Solidarity leader Zbigniew Kowalewski in an account on the situation in Poland "On the Eve of Martial Law" appearing in the January 1982 edition of *International*, published by our British comrades: First, the introduction by the editors of *International* says, "The following is an account published in *Le Monde* by Zbigniew Kowalewski of the situation in Poland and the discussions taking place within the union just prior to the imposition of martial law. Kowalewski was in Paris at the time of the military crackdown."

The sense of Kowalewski's viewpoint is captured in the following paragraph from his article:

The day before, on December 3, during the presidium meeting of the national commission at Radom, Lech Walesa and numerous other leaders, convinced as we were in Lodz of the revolutionary character of the situation, had for the first time posed the question: who should rule? A bureaucratic minority or the working masses? For several months this question had been ripening within the working class, posing at the same time the fundamental problem of the Polish revolution. That is what the workers told us during factory meetings, demanding that we struggle for free elections.

Comrade Seigle: Would you call that viewpoint provocative?

I return now to the January 29 PC letter. The PC, here, centers its polemic against participation in *any* joint action in solidarity with Solidarity here in the U.S. and by implication everywhere outside of Poland. To underscore the PC's political orientation, the February 19 *Militant* coverage of a rally in New York on February 6, "An Evening for Solidarity," carries this abstentionist line to absurd lengths. The focus of the *Militant* story and an accompanying editorial is on an anti-communist speech by writer Susan Sontag. The opening and closing sentences of the *Militant* editorial sum up the content of the piece as a whole. The opening sentence is: "At a rally in New York on Feb. 6, entitled 'An Evening for Solidarity,' a terrible blow was struck at the cause of the Polish workers." The closing sentence of this editorial in the *Militant* completes this theme: "The episode should drive home the point that Polish solidarity activities in this country that don't take as their framework uncompromising opposition to im-

perialism and to the capitalist government in Washington merely open the door to betrayals of the workers of Poland and of the world." The message is unmistakable: Not only was Susan Sontag's speech "a terrible blow struck at the cause of the Polish workers," but the event as a whole constituted such a terrible blow.

This view is contradicted by the facts as reported in the *Militant* account itself. While passing note is taken in the story that "The Marxist viewpoint was not represented on the platform," the report further explained, "The SWP had requested to have a speaker but was denied." Firstly in regard to the latter point, we are not told — as the editorial implies — whether we might be grateful at having been denied an opportunity to speak and thus saved from having participated in an event which the *Militant* insinuated was a "terrible blow" against the Polish workers.

Secondly, what are we to make of the viewpoint expressed there by Paul Robeson Jr. and reported in the same *Militant* article? This is what the *Militant* reported:

Paul Robeson, Jr., told the crowd: "Solidarity's courageous struggle has given the world movement for socialism an opportunity to re-identify socialism with democracy and workers power.

It has given those who really believe in the working class a chance to recapture the banner of socialism from the party bureaucrats who have usurped the slogan 'All power to the soviets' in order to administer a political system based on 'zero power to the soviets.'

"[Solidarity's struggle] calls on all those who believe in socialism to restore true internationalism and to reject once and for all the poisonous legacy of Josef Stalin, who was responsible for the deaths of so many millions of his own people in the name of 'socialism in one country.'

"One thing has been proven conclusively. If, after making a successful revolution, the workers are deprived of political power, for whatever reason, that power will never be given back to them. They can only conquer it by making another revolution.

"Solidarity is the harbinger of an idea whose time has come," Robeson told the crowd.

Isn't this a Marxist viewpoint?

In an account in *The Village Voice*, February 10-16, 1982, Alexander Cockburn indicates that this was the overwhelmingly predominant character of the meeting as a whole. He quotes significant extracts from the speeches of Ralph Schoenman, the organizer of the meeting; Daniel Singer, author of the *Road to Gdansk*; Gore Vidal, author; Pete Seeger, long-time leftist folk-singer; Sam Meyers of the UAW; Carlos Fuentes; a message from William Winpisinger, IAM president; Pete Camarata of Teamsters for a Democratic Union; Dave Skocik of PATCO; Joan Teolis of the Independent Federation of Flight Attendants; Greg Pardlo of Newark Towers PATCO; Kurt Vonnegut; Allen Ginsberg, poet; Alexander Erlich, described as "a Pole now teaching at Columbia and a socialist for 50 years."

According to the extensive selection of quotations in Cockburn's *Village Voice* account the meeting was decisively united in opposition to Sontag and Brodsky's reactionary remarks. Cockburn sizes up the meeting as follows:

The audience and the platform were filled with people who had, for longer than three decades, excoriated the depredations of Stalin as socialists and anti-capitalist radicals. On the platform with Sontag were Paul Robeson Jr. and Pete Seeger, both well-associated in the public mind with that very movement which she [Sontag] decried as "successful fascism" who could scarcely, given their attendance and commitment to a movement to defend the Polish workers be accused of absolute, ongoing intellectual myopia.

Why should everyone in Town Hall, or on the American left, be asked to bear the burden of Sontag's apparent bad conscience, deployed against the left, apparently as an act of willful sabotage worthy of Joseph Brodsky, who at least does not conceal his conservative views. And against the left, in an evening devoted to sup-

port for Polish workers!

Robeson told the audience that every socialist, every radical, indeed any Marxist, would always be with the workers in their struggle, and not with an oligarchy, no matter the label under which it paraded. He cited Marx in defense of Solidarity, to the effect that the trade union movement must always be independent of any political party, including the party of the revolution.

It would seem to me that the eloquent remarks by Robeson and others quoted by Cockburn in support of workers in Poland, El Salvador, Turkey and the U.S. and against capitalism and imperialism as well as against the counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy, all add up to a ringing political statement that we should be proud to identify with, despite the unfortunate absence of an SWP speaker.

The January 29 PC letter has audaciously and injudiciously drawn upon quotations from James P. Cannon to buttress the infantile sectarian thesis that participation in joint actions like the February 6 Town Hall meeting are ruled out for now.

The PC would have been better advised to have used more caution than to call on the testimony of Jim Cannon.

The Cannon quotes cited by the PC are from his *Militant* article "American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism" reprinted in *The Struggle for Socialism in the American Century*, James P. Cannon, Writings and Speeches, 1945-47.

The brief description introducing the article by the book's editors succinctly sums up the historical context: "The following articles, originally inspired by a disagreement between the SWP and Ruth Fischer over how to criticize Stalinism, became a major programmatic statement of the SWP on *how to meet the deepening anticommunist witch-hunt*" (my emphasis). As any serious student of that period should know, the issue addressed by Cannon was the pessimism of the Ruth Fischers who having lost confidence in the capacity of workers in Europe to mount a revolutionary socialist assault against Stalinism turned to an alliance with imperialism against "communist despotism." Cannon however, is not at all unsympathetic to the revulsion felt by honest workers to the bloody Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorship. Cannon says on page 349:

It is wrong to make a fetish of violence and terror, to see only the GPU and not the tens of millions of Communist and Socialist workers in Europe. It is fatally wrong to lose faith in the ability of these workers to overcome their illusions and take their destiny into their own hands. And it is criminal to proceed from these errors — as so many anti-Stalinists are doing in this country — to the dreadful and monstrous conclusion: The destruction of hateful Stalinism must be entrusted to Truman and his Atomic bombs.

Participation in joint actions such as the two in San Francisco and the February 6 Town Hall meeting in New York cannot by any stretch of the imagination be seen as an example of entrusting the destruction of Stalinism to the current equivalents of Harry Truman and their atom bombs — such as seems to be the point of the PC. Their argument is based on the absolutely false thesis — completely alien to Cannon — that the presence of a handful of Libertarians or Susan Sontags irresistibly transmutes such actions in solidarity with the Polish workers into their opposite.

The logic of this position is absolutely identical to the sectarian criticism of Trotsky's acceptance of an invitation to appear before the arch-reactionary US Congress House Committee on UnAmerican Activities.

In a piece entitled "Ruth Fischer and the Stalinists" in the same book by Cannon he corrects an error made by our party that touches closely on the question before us.

In the course of the editorial [in the *Militant*], Ruth Fischer was referred to, in passing, as an "informer." In view of the invidious connotation which is popularly attached to the word "informer,"

this was a most unfortunate and most inexcusable error. All the more inexcusable since we Trotskyists for many long years have been explaining the criminal character of Stalinism and its GPU murder machine, and have been denouncing it and "informing" against it, and alarming the workers of the world to its deadly menace. We have done this on every possible occasion and from every available forum, be it a public mass meeting, a Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials, the capitalist press, parliamentary committees, or even capitalist courts. And we will gladly do the same again on any occasion where the opportunity presents itself.

Cannon here clearly rejects the infantile notion attributed to him by implication that he would have refused to participate in a demonstration merely because reactionaries were present.

In the Jan. 29 letter the PC chops a part of a sentence from out of five paragraphs in my letter where I deal with Stalinism as an agency of imperialism. Listen to how the PC handles this point: "Comrade Weinstein presents a totally different starting point [from Cannon]. He says, 'a struggle here, as everywhere, against Stalinism *is* a struggle against world capitalism — against our own capitalist government!'"⁶ Even out of context it is hard to find fault with this thought.

But the PC injures its own integrity by falsely attributing to me the "idea of an 'all-inclusive' struggle — one that does not begin with a defense of socialist revolution and the gains of the existing workers states . . ." ⁷ But let's hear what Cannon has to say regarding his view that Stalinism is an agency of imperialism and that the struggle against Stalinism *is* part and parcel of the struggle against imperialism (page 376):

The foregoing considerations fully apply to the problem of Stalinism, which is one of the agencies of capitalism in the labor movement, and the fight against it. The advanced workers above all must give thought to this problem and work out their policy from an independent class standpoint. Stalinism helps the capitalists by introducing disruption, confusion, and demoralization into the labor movement, and sells its services to the capitalists in this destructive capacity. To be sure, Stalinism tries to drive a hard bargain with the imperialists. The bargaining over the terms of betrayal sets up conflicts and irritations, as at the present time in the US which gives the false appearance of a revolutionary struggle.

This, however, does not change the basic fact that Stalinism is essentially an agency of world imperialism in the labor movement of the advanced countries, as well as in the colonial world. But for Stalinism, all of continental Europe would long since have been united in a Federation of Socialist Republics. Even today, after all that has happened, after all the harm that has been done and all the destruction that has been wrought, not a single capitalist regime would stand up for a month in continental Europe unless it was propped up and supported by Stalinism, the "loyal opposition."

I leave you to judge whether Cannon's view here is consistent with the PC's version of Cannon's views.

This brings me to the sudden explosion of concern by the PC over "third campism." In a fundamental Marxist sense there is no such animal. All political forces, from governments to political tendencies are compelled to choose between the contending classes, proletarian and capitalist, in the world historic struggle for socialism.

Political forces, many who fancy themselves as independent of the contending classes, may waver, vacillate, go first one way then the other, or vainly strive to abstain from the struggle. But there is no neutral ground. Social Democracy, Stalinism and "simple" labor bureaucrats are typical of the wavering and vacillating petty-bourgeois forces that are at times and for their own

6. *IIIB* No. 2 in 1982, page 8.

7. *IIIB* No. 2 in 1982, page 8.

caste interests in the camp of the workers; and at other times — most of the time — are in the camp of the capitalists. In either phase they are treacherous and deadly-dangerous agents and transmitters of the ideology of the enemy class.

It is sadly ironic that the PC, in its concern not to be smeared by association with state department “socialists” and “third campers,” finds itself in the company of the Stalinists who also boycott demonstrations in support of Solidarity and the Polish workers.

The PC, moreover, has been quite shy about the Cuban, Nicaraguan and Grenadan press’s shameful defense of Stalinist repression of the workers in Poland. The Castroist line on Poland amounts to tailending the Stalinists in their betrayal of the world socialist revolution. This does great harm to the revolution in the Caribbean and Central America and everywhere else.

In sharp contrast to the Castroist action, our duty to the revolutionary forces in Central America, the Caribbean and everywhere else, is to vigorously call attention to and oppose the harmful consequences of tailing Stalinist policy in Poland. We are obligated to say loud and clear that any support given to Stalinist military repression against the workers gives imperialism a club to be used against the workers and peasants in Central America and the Caribbean, today!

This is our proletarian internationalist duty. This duty is ill-served by the February 26 issue of the *Militant* which contains the first major piece commenting on Cuban support of the Stalinist repression in Poland.

The article by comrade Dave Frankel is disturbing in two basic respects: 1. It paints a prettified picture of the Cuban press’s support of the counterrevolutionary crackdown by the Polish bureaucracy. And, 2. Frankel never once mentions the Stalinist character of the Polish bureaucracy, nor its quality as a hardened bureaucratic caste that is incapable of being reformed and must be smashed, overthrown and replaced by a regime of workers democracy; and that the name of this process is “political revolution.” (Parenthetically, the term, although used in previous *Militant* accounts on Poland, had been given an ambiguous content. The error is deepened in Frankel’s article by his omission of the term, “political revolution.”)

The criticism by Frankel of the Castroist support to the Stalinist bureaucracy is so muted that the unmistakable impression the reader is left with is that the Cuban position is in reality a left-handed support to Solidarnosc. The article, for example, concludes with a sizable quotation from an interview with Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, a member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party. In Frankel’s hands, it boils down to using Rodríguez’s criticism of the milder form of bureaucracy in Cuba to obscure the Castroist support to the virulent bureaucratic dictatorship in Poland, and the repression of the workers there.

It is shameful to offer to Polish workers under the heel of the Stalinist bureaucracy, Fidel Castro, who supports the bureaucratic repression in Poland, as a model opponent of bureaucracy.

An even more glaring omission in the *Militant* article on the Castroist infidelity to the Polish working class is the failure to mention Trotsky and his struggle against the hardened bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union. Nor is there a hint in this account of the existence of Trotsky’s epochal work *The Revolution Betrayed*, the only rounded scientific analysis of bureaucratic degeneration in the workers state.

The point of this is not to insert an obligatory reference to Trotsky or Trotskyism, but if this article by Comrade Frankel is intended for readers in Cuba, aren’t these missing political elements indispensable for understanding the revolutionary Marxist position on the historic events in Poland? This is even more important from the point of view of our readers in the American working class. This fundamental flaw in Frankel’s article must

be rectified.

A similar criticism must be published in our press against identical false positions appearing in the Nicaraguan and Grenadan press in support of the Stalinist repression of the Polish workers.

The Polish revolution, as I presume all here would agree, is far from crushed. We, along with all revolutionary currents, will be confronted with new tests, the consequences of which cannot be overstated. The Polish events cannot fail to make a continuing and growing impact on the class struggle here and everywhere. Our stance on the side of the Polish workers must be clear and unambiguous. The PC’s position is ambiguous and contradictory. If persisted in, in the great events upcoming, it will lead to a setback to our party.

We must fully digest the significance of the developing political revolution in Poland and the direct application of the lessons of that struggle to the American revolution.

We have seen time and again how life has confirmed the laws of the permanent revolution. Repeatedly in the underdeveloped world, petty bourgeois led revolutionary movements have been compelled to transcend the bourgeois limits they had imposed in advance on the tasks of the revolutions in that part of the world.

Now we are witnessing in Poland confirmation of our theoretical concepts of revolutionary strategy based on the model provided by the three Russian revolutions. The magnificent self-mobilization of the Polish working class has brilliantly confirmed the method of the Transitional Program. We see once again, in all its colors, the dialectical interaction between mass mobilizations and heightening consciousness.

The Polish workers began their struggle in the fight for reforms and concessions against the worst excesses of the bureaucratic regime. Fed by victories which won a little more bread and better working conditions, and the self-confidence this brought them, they raised new demands starting with control over the workplace and leading to democratic management of the economy as a whole.

We see now unfolding a new stage of polarization in Poland between workers and bureaucrats reflecting a growing comprehension of the necessity of wrenching all political levers away from the bureaucracy.

A parallel dynamic is underway within the Polish workers vanguard. A revolutionary leadership is being selected out and steeled in the fires of the struggle. The bureaucratic attempts to quench the revolutionary flames is tempering the class as a whole and is sharpening the ideological cutting edge of the revolutionary vanguard. A revolutionary leadership is being forged and will be completed when the leading layers become entirely conscious of the inherent dynamic of the struggle.

The Fourth International is an indispensable aid toward the development of a conscious vanguard. A small nucleus had been formed in Poland just before the counterrevolutionary war launched by the bureaucracy against the workers. The Polish workers won’t have to start from scratch to relearn every lesson of the workers struggle for emancipation. The FI has preserved those historical lessons and will share them with our class brothers and sisters. And it is only these lessons embodied in the program of the FI that can lead the Polish workers to a successful political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucratic caste — not the Castroists or any other political current. We can expect the Polish workers will readily borrow from the arsenal of Marxism that the Trotskyist movement has collected and preserved.

In providing what assistance we can to Polish workers, as we are ready to do everywhere, we prepare ourselves for the coming American revolution. The solidarity campaign with the Polish workers facilitates the development of our ties here with our class. The Polish example, like the Russian model, is directly re-

levant to the tasks of the American revolution. Revolutions such as the ones in Cuba, China and Vietnam, important as they are to the world proletariat, cannot serve as models for the coming American revolution.

Cannon's American Theses (Theses on the American Revolution, adopted at 1946 SWP convention), embodying the principles now being illuminated by the Polish revolution is based on the fundamental premise that the American revolution will be carried out by the workers themselves, in their own name, in an open struggle for its class interests, and consolidating its victory through the establishment of workers power; the dictatorship of

the proletariat. The American Theses are in direct variance with the notion of a petty-bourgeois surrogate substituting itself for a working-class party and program.

The Polish-Russian model will provide powerful examples illustrating the class struggle road to workers power.

These fundamental principles of our party are presently under attack by the PC. Nowhere is this more evident than in the PC's developing positions in regard to the unfolding political revolution in Poland. I strongly urge this plenum to consider the danger this constitutes and register opposition to the PC's line on Poland.

Political Principles and Organization Methods

by Milton Alvin

I have just finished reading "Defending the Organizational Principles of a Proletarian Party," (Internal Information Bulletin No. 1 in 1982, Sept. 1982). I want to comment on some of the material.

I. The relation of politics to organization

I am appalled at what the National Committee has done at its February-March and August 1982 plenums. You have overthrown the most important organizational principles that have been our standard guide from the time of the inception of our movement in this country and before that of the Lenin-Trotsky leadership in the Soviet Union and the Third International.

But it is no surprise that you have taken this road. It has always followed that those who changed their political views as much as you have must take the next step which is to change the organizational methods to suit the new outlook. The political changes made in the last decade or so are obvious. They begin with a turn in orientation from the Fourth International to Castroism and include abandonment of our Transitional Program on some points, alteration of it on others and changes of methods of work in unions and other mass organizations.

You say that "We consider ourselves part of a common world Marxist movement with the FSLN, with the New Jewel Movement, with the Cuban Communist Party, with the vanguard proletarian leaderships of the revolutionary struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala." (page 3)* But there is no such thing as a common Marxist movement that includes those mentioned above and ourselves. Certainly, you must have noticed that these organizations are rather standoffish politically in their attitude towards us, especially the Cubans.

Of course, there are reasons for this. The Cubans are dependent for their very existence upon financial, military and diplomatic support from Stalinist rulers in the Soviet Union. The others, in turn, are dependant upon the Cubans. Under present day conditions, we cannot expect those you have chosen to be members of a common world Marxist movement to take their places alongside of us. That would be suicidal for them.

In addition to these reasons, there are the differences we have with them. Despite all the progressive and revolutionary things they have done, they have some serious shortcomings. For example, they support the martial law regime in Poland while we oppose it, call for its overthrow and identify with Solidarity. Another example is our different views on proletarian democracy. Still another is the Cuban position on the 1968 repression of the Czechoslovakian reform movement. Even though they did criticize the Stalinists, in the end they supported the Soviet invasion.

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that, for whatever reason, the Cubans identify with Stalinist regimes and parties in the Soviet bloc and not with us. For our party to consider itself a part of a movement that includes the Cubans is absurd and results from holding on to illusions. This, of course, does not in any way reduce our unconditional support to them against imperialism and approval of most of what they have done.

It is obvious from our press and day-to-day activity that the minds of our party leaders are not upon the United States but are largely concentrated upon Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada, and El Salvador. This has happened before in our movement. A comment from James P. Cannon can throw some light on this kind of problem. In a letter to Theodore Draper Cannon wrote: "The degeneration of the Communist Party began when it abandoned the perspective of a revolution in this country, and converted itself into a pressure group and cheering squad for the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia — which it mistakenly took to be the custodian of a revolution. What happened to the Communist Party would happen without fail to any other party, including our own, if it should abandon its struggle for a social revolution in this country, as the realistic perspective of our epoch, and degrade itself to the role of sympathizer of revolutions in other countries." ("The First Ten Years of American Communism," by James P. Cannon, pages 37, 38).

It is necessary only to change a few names in order to get a description of the current state of affairs in our party and the leadership's orientation. It makes no difference, in this respect, that our cheerleaders are shouting for movements that are better than those of the Stalinists of the 1920s. It is the method that is important.

You deny the charge of the Fourth International leadership majority that you are revising the program of our movement. If you are right, where is the campaign for a shorter work week that we should have been carrying on now for at least a few years? Why are our union members not bringing up this question in their organizations, showing how it is almost fifty years since the workers won the eight-hour day and forty-hour week? Why aren't they trying to get their locals to support the shorter work week as a necessary historical step to deal with unemployment that takes on a permanent character for many workers?

Why aren't party members, especially candidates for public office, demanding nationalization under workers control of the many factories and other enterprises shut down in the last few years? This and the shorter work week are ritualistically mentioned once in a while in our press, but no campaign or regular propaganda is heard or seen.

Why does the leadership deny our members in unions permission to run in elections for union posts, even such modest posts as department steward? How can our unionists gain any influence if they refuse to take responsibility for the needs of the workers who are closest to them, in their own departments?

Why did the party leaders drag their feet in supporting last year's September 19th demonstration in Washington? Why are they opposed to participating with our own signs and slogans in demonstrations and picket lines supporting Solidarity? Why is there so much hesitation to support the anti-nuclear movement, with our own program, of course?

The above is a partial list of how our program has indeed been revised. If the national committee does not see this, it means our party is in danger. These revisions are not only a reality but have resulted in big losses in membership in a period when we could have shown some growth, perhaps only a modest growth. Instead, we have lost from one-third to one-half of those who were with us ten years ago. I don't think they have been replaced with

*Unless otherwise noted, page numbers refer to above Internal Information Bulletin.

that many new recruits.

II. Tendencies and factions

The National Committee has taken a novel position on the right to form tendencies and factions. According to the latest strictures, those who want to form a group must apply for a license from the ruling bodies of the party, submit a document that outlines their ideas, make up a list of those who are members of the group and, if there are any nuances among them, they must be listed and explained. If members of the group live in different cities and correspond with one another, copies of their letters must be furnished to the authorities.

I don't know, and a careful reading of all the material submitted does not say, where the above rules governing formation of groups in the party came from. None of those who support these innovations cite any document or the party constitution. It can only be inferred that these are indeed inventions thought up by the present majority to make it difficult, if not impossible, to oppose their revisionist political line.

In my forty-seven years in our movement I have seen many factions organized by members who had ideas in common and thought it necessary to take such a step. Not a single one of these asked anyone if it was all right to form such a group. Not a single one had to submit a list of its members. Not a single one turned over copies of internal correspondence to the Political Committee. It never occurred to the majority of the party and the leadership to require such things of those who went into opposition for some reason or another or to threaten them with organizational measures.

It was the custom to debate the political issues in dispute, to clarify all differences so that the membership could make an intelligent decision before organizational questions were raised. For example, Cannon's "Struggle for a Proletarian Party," taking up organizational questions in the 1939-1940 factional fight, and admired by Trotsky, was submitted to the membership only after about six months of the seven-month dispute had gone by, too late to have any effect, that is, in the fight itself, but designed, as Cannon explained, to help educate his own group.

In every case where factions and tendencies have been formed to oppose whatever it was they objected to, they have been given plenty of time to speak at meetings and all the space they asked for in internal bulletins. If they were small groups, that made no difference. The Robertson group is a good example. They had less than a dozen members. Their internal documents, not submitted to the party as a whole, described the SWP as an obstacle to the socialist revolution that must be destroyed. Whatever one may say about other groups that arose in the party in the past, not one that I know of took so extreme a position as this. Each of the others, over the years, tried to get changes in the program, method of functioning or to win a majority for its political views. But I don't know of any that placed on its banner a slogan calling for destruction of the party.

Nevertheless, the Robertsonites were given all the space they wanted in the internal bulletin. They had all the time they wanted to speak at meetings. When they were brought before the National Committee for their offenses, they appeared and spoke in their defense. Their expulsion from the party, which was richly deserved, was for their stated aim of destroying the party. But no one proposed to expel them for forming a group and trying to convince others to join, or even trying to recruit new members first to their program and then to the party, a method called double recruiting.

Robertsonites first recruited or tried to recruit a new member with the idea that the SWP had to be destroyed. If they were successful at that, they then asked the recruit to join the very party they were out to remove from the scene. If the record shows that

they came up with few recruits, it should be no surprise.

With all that, they formed a group and functioned as a group without anyone asking to see their internal material, the nature of which the majority did not know. This was furnished by Wohlforth, a one-time associate of Robertson's, who disagreed on destroying the SWP and, although he had an opposition group of his own, was loyal enough to the party to give the leadership the material turned out by the Robertsonites. No one asked the Robertsonites for a list of their members, to see copies of letters they sent to one another or for explanations of possible nuances among them.

Supporters of new norms in the party make frequent references to the resolution "The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party," adopted at the 1965 convention, and other material published since that takes its point of departure from this document. But the quotations are very selective and omit anything that may be contrary to the new line.

For example, in all 160 pages of the bulletin under discussion, they had no room for the following: "The party intervenes in the daily struggle with transitional demands stemming from today's conditions and today's consciousness within sections of the mass movement." ("Education for Socialists," July 1970, page 5). This has been studiously ignored by dumping the party's transitional program overboard. Another quote: "The right to organize tendencies and factions is safeguarded." (Ibid., page 12). Nothing is said about getting anyone's permission, to submit lists of tendency members, etc., etc. Still another: "The leadership of the party must be under control of the membership, its policies must always be open to criticism, discussion and rectification by the rank and file within properly established forms and limits, and the leading bodies subject to recall and alteration." (Ibid., page 23). This obviously implies that the membership has the right to discuss with one another. Please note the word "always" in the above quote. Of course, if a leadership is so inclined, it can use the phrase "properly established forms and limits" to make rules that nullify the obvious intent of this section which is have a free and democratic party.

Here is what Cannon had to say on this point:

In a live and free party, where members do their own thinking — and that is the only kind of party worth a fig — everybody does not come to the same conclusion at the same moment. Common acceptance of basic principles does not ensure uniform answers to the concrete questions of the day. The party position can be worked out only in a process of collective thought and exchange of opinion. That is possible only in a free, that is, a democratic party. ("The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party," page 48, a reprint of Cannon's article, "The New Party is Founded," *New International*, February 1938).

Another very important point upon which mistakes have been made is confusing the right to begin a discussion in the party with the right to form a tendency or faction. These are not the same things. The party constitution and resolutions adopted on organizational principles are clear in giving the right to begin internal discussions to the national committee. There is no dispute on this.

But the same documents do not in any way restrict the right to form groupings in the party. They do not say that groupings can be formed only in pre-convention discussion periods. Comrades who want to form a group can do so at any time. They cannot begin a general discussion of their views in the party unless the national committee organizes such a discussion. But their right to organize themselves, to communicate with one another and to formulate their ideas among themselves, is not subject to any restrictions. And this right is certainly not subject to the rules and regulations set down by the series of motions adopted by the February-March plenum and contained in letters from party leaders.

Unless the N.C. retracts the position it has taken on this point, it will have dealt our organizational principles a severe blow.

Among the motions adopted at the February-March plenum were numbers eleven and twelve which read in part, "This includes the right and responsibility to regulate the internal democracy of groupings, tendencies and factions of the party, in line with the party's organizational principles." (page 14). This is a reference to rights of the national committee and the political committee and is supposed to be in the interest of protecting the "democratic rights of the entire party and its membership," as another part of the same motions explains. The source for this authority is given only as "in line with the party's organizational principles." But where these principles exist is not stated. *The reason is that this is not in line with our principles but directly contrary to them.* There has never been any resolution or provision in the party constitution that authorizes the leadership to intervene in the internal affairs of a grouping. And, as I have described, no party leadership in the past has ever tried to do so.

The basis of the new norms (they are not described as new by the authors) is said to be in the writings of James P. Cannon, Farrell Dobbs and Leon Trotsky. A number of their books are cited. But no one will find any of the new norms now imposed upon the party by the present leaders in any of these publications. They are: "Struggle for a Proletarian Party," "The History of American Trotskyism," and "Internationalism and the SWP," all by James P. Cannon; Farrell Dobbs' books (not individually identified) and "In Defense of Marxism," by Leon Trotsky. (page 18).

Not only do the above writings fail to sustain claims of the party leaders, they prove exactly the opposite. None of these books even hint at the kind of restrictions upon party members that have recently been imposed. These innovations are the product of the revisionists in the party leadership and not based upon anything that Cannon, Dobbs and Trotsky wrote.

For example, Farrell Dobbs, in a series of lectures he gave at Oberlin in August, 1970, said, "Democratic Centralist norms require a free and democratic internal party atmosphere. Room must be provided for the expression of dissident views. *The right to organize tendencies and factions must be protected.*" (Educational Bulletin in June 1971, page 19, emphasis added). He said nothing about limiting the time when this could be done. In the same lecture Dobbs correctly states that discussion in the party can only be begun at the call of the national committee. But the list of restrictions now placed upon formation of groupings is not to be found here. These are the brain-child of the present leadership.

The demands made by Comrade Barnes upon Comrades Weinstein and Henderson, that they furnish a list of members of their tendency and that they explain "certain reservations over several minor aspects" they had on the Lovell-Bloom declaration, (pages 22, 23) are examples of unauthorized and unprecedented intervention by party leaders into fields where they have no business and, as previously explained, no prior leadership ever ventured.

These demands by Comrade Barnes are not designed to protect anyone's democratic rights in the party or of the party as a whole, as he claimed, but rather to make it harder for critics of the leadership to function and to exercise *their* democratic rights in accordance with long-established norms. This much must be painfully obvious.

III. Expulsions from the party

The leadership has disgraced the party by expelling a group of comrades from the Twin Cities branch. These are Greg Cornell, Harry DeBoer, Jake Cooper and Gillian Furst. Were any of these charged with being enemies of the working class or of the party? No. Were they agents of our enemies? No. Did they sabotage the

party's work? No. Even Cornell, who was charged with carrying out a line contrary to the party's was accused only of trying to get those going to Washington for the September 19 demonstration from Minnesota, to use buses driven only by union drivers. Is this a crime that warrants expulsion? Or should the leadership have tried to convince Cornell that he should have carried out the line of the party, even if it was wrong in his opinion. And to await an opportunity to discuss the whole thing.

The branch evidently thought that a censure, a modest rebuke, was sufficient and that is what they voted to do. But the national committee decided to go them one better and voted to expel him. Obviously, party leaders are more skilled at throwing members out than recruiting new ones.

If the expulsion of Cornell was not justified, the later similar treatment meted out to the other three was an outrage. Their only "crime," if it can be so designated, was to call for the formation of a faction. They had a perfect right to do so. As previously explained, there is no constitutional or other restriction on when factions may be formed. The reporter, John Gaige, asserts that, "To form a faction when there's no pre-convention discussion — which would be an exceptional situation — requires the approval of the elected party bodies." (page 71). He is dead wrong, of course. Later he says that the 1965 organizational resolution provides that this is the right procedure. (page 71). But he does not say just where in the resolution this can be found. The reason is that it says no such thing, and in fact, it does not make any restrictions upon forming groups in the party.

Regarding the same case, a statement by the Secretariat of the political committee says, "No prior request has been made to any party body for authorization to organize a faction outside the normal procedures for doing so — which would be to publish a faction platform in the party bulletin when the National Committee opens a discussion in the party." (page 73). Once again there is confusion between formation of a faction and unauthorized discussion.

The three comrades who formed a faction had a perfect right to do so. In their statement they called for a convention and a pre-convention discussion period, obviously acting in the way party norms required. They made no unilateral attempt to start a discussion. If they made any mistake, it was in mailing out copies of their statement to branches. But is one to be expelled for a mistake of such puny proportions after putting in about a half century of work for our cause? Is this proletarian justice? It can only bring disgrace upon the party.

In the list of motions adopted by the February-March plenum on party norms a number of comrades who are members of the national committee are threatened with immediate suspensions, if they are guilty of "any further violations." (page 25). The motion does not propose to suspend them for alleged *prior* violations; it refers to violations that may take place in the *future*. This alone is a blatant violation of the party constitution which provides that members charged with violations must receive such charges in writing, that a committee appointed by a proper body hear the charges and any defense by those accused and then report to the party body having jurisdiction that makes the decision. There is no explanation by those who made the motions of why this constitutional provision was discarded in favor of a bureaucratic threat to suspend national committee members for future and unknown violations that no one can predict with any accuracy.

Following this item there is a series of threats of "immediate expulsion" from the party of comrades who are not national committee members but who are suspected of possible "further violations." (page 25). Here, also, the comrades charged are not threatened for previous alleged transgressions, but for some that may come in the future. Presumably, the four N.C. members

would have been faced with expulsions too but for the fact that the party constitution provides that only a convention can expel N.C. members. The national committee itself can only suspend members by a two-thirds vote.

All in all, these motions are illegal; they are crass violations of the party constitution and all our previous organizational resolutions. We have never had automatic expulsions and suspensions in our party. Such a method implies that comrades selected are guilty of something even before any act has been committed, or they have been picked as future violators without any evidence that they plan future violations. This sets up two categories of membership: one that is in good standing with the authorities and a second that has a sword of Damocles over its head, ready to fall, if anyone gets out of line, in the opinion of those who hold the power.

Obviously, comrades who have a threat of immediate and automatic expulsion hanging over them cannot be expected to do the kind of work or to be in the proper frame of mind to do such work as others who are not threatened. Just what is gained by this foolish and illegal procedure is not explained and, indeed, it cannot be. (pages 25, 26, 27).

The remarks attributed to Comrade Lovell by Comrade Seigle at the August plenum cannot be accurate. If he actually said that "nobody was ever expelled from our party," he was wrong. But it is far more likely that he was repeating what Cannon said many times and that is we have never expelled anyone for *opinions held*, only for violations of discipline. Lovell knows well enough that we have indeed expelled people but I am sure that he said or meant to say what I have described. (page 146).

In the same speech Comrade Seigle has two errors regarding what the party did with the Cochran faction. First of all, they were not expelled, they were suspended and given a chance to come back to the party. This was at a plenum held in November 1953. When those who did not come back by the time of the next convention, held in 1954, they were expelled. And the boycott they conducted was not of a fund-raiser banquet but a public meeting held to celebrate the party's twenty-fifth anniversary (counting from 1928) and the conclusion of the mayoralty campaign in New York in which Dave Weiss was our candidate. If anyone ate anything there, they brought it in a brown bag. I was present at the meeting. (page 146).

IV. The Asher Harer case

Of all the weird things I have seen in my many years in the movement (I hope the authorities will forgive me for mentioning years of service which they seem to think of no importance) the case of Asher Harer challenges another for first prize.

Up to now, this has been firmly held by the Socialist Labor Party. In the late 1940s I had a chance to read several internal bulletins of the SLP and they were eye-openers. I was astonished to read a very lengthy article, taking up an entire issue, written by the leader of the party, that dealt with only one point. It was a complaint about one of the women secretaries who worked in the party's national office. She was charged with coming to work late, with taking too much time for lunch, with having friends visit her at the office during working hours and other accusations of similar importance politically. This was not meant to be funny; it was written in dead seriousness.

The Asher Harer case, however, with all its surprising aspects, must be considered a challenger to the SLP. I sincerely hope that no one outside of our movement gets hold of the Asher Harer story because it would make us a laughing stock in political circles. How the party leaders got themselves embroiled in this thing is a mystery to me. But they latched onto it as though they had got hold of some important principle and wouldn't let go, even after a majority of the San Francisco branch, where all the

main antagonists belonged, supported Comrade Harer and repudiated the party leaders.

The incident involved a remark made by Comrade Burfeind to Asher Harer at which the latter took umbrage and threatened to punch the former. Realizing that he was out of line, Harer apologized at once. Comrade Burfeind accepted the apology and invited Asher to have dinner at his house. Harer insisted that Burfeind come to his house for dinner and that is what happened.

Reasonable people would have considered the incident closed at this point. After all, Harer did not strike anyone and the two comrades settled things by themselves without anyone suffering any physical injury. At the most, a leading party member could have taken Asher aside and talked to him about the impropriety of his threat. Of course, Asher knew that it was improper as he apologized to the branch as well as to Burfeind.

But somehow or other, after the incident should have been closed, Comrade Burfeind brought charges against Harer and opened up a Pandora's box of debates in the San Francisco branch, the branch executive committee, the Northern California district committee, the California state committee, the district membership, and to top things off, at the national committee plenum in August. I had hoped that the party leaders would not find any more places to bring this matter. But I may be too optimistic; I have heard that it has been referred back to the No. Calif. district committee.

If all the time and effort spent upon this incident had been used to try to understand better what is going on in the United States and how the SWP should relate to it, perhaps some progress could have been made. But it seems the party leaders would rather monkey around (what else can it be called?) with the case of Asher Harer than try to see what they should do.

V. Conclusion

As a final point I would like to call attention to the method used by Cannon. After all, he has been quoted in this discussion by both sides. In 1954, while I was at the Trotsky School in New Jersey, I received the following letter from James P. Cannon, then residing in Los Angeles:

Feb. 9, 1954

Milt Alvin
Trotsky School

Dear Milt:

I am enclosing copies of some political letters I have been writing recently, to keep you up to date on some of the matters discussed in correspondence between me and the Center.

If you and the other students at the School feel like expressing yourselves on some of these matters, or disagree with anything said, I would be glad to hear from you from time to time.

Fraternally,

James P. Cannon

There were fifteen letters in the group, nine in the first batch and six in the second. I cite this incident to show that Jim did not believe in secrecy, especially on political questions that the rank-and-file had to know about. And all the nine students at this session of the school were indeed rank-and-filers; not one was even an alternate on the national committee. At most, they were local and branch leaders.

Jim's method was to be as loose as possible and not as tight as he could have been. For years he boasted that our control com-

mission had nothing to do. And this was before, during and after one faction fight after another. It was his proposal, in 1940 or 1941, to form a control commission in our party for the first time.

In motivating his proposal, he described the control commission as a Party Court of Justice, where members could go with a complaint and not just a court where accused transgressors could be brought up on charges.

But this institution, like so many others throughout history, has degenerated and, in fact, turned into its opposite. Instead of acting like a Party Court of Justice, the control commission has

recently taken on the characteristics of the Spanish Inquisition. Comrades live in fear of a knock on their doors that might bring a couple of representatives from the commission to ask all kinds of questions, deserved or undeserved. It is time to halt this kind of business that only creates an atmosphere in the party that demoralizes some members and drives them out.

I ask the leadership to consider most seriously the explanation Cannon made about how and when the Communist Party started to degenerate. I hope the leadership will take steps to revive the use of our Transitional Program, correct methods of work in mass organizations and go back to the tested methods of organization that served us so well for decades.