

**Information, Education, Discussion** **Bulletin**

**In Defense of Marxism**

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

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

—V.I. Lenin, "The Party Crisis," Jan. 19, 1921 [quoted in Trotsky's *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926-27), p. 247; for another translation see Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32, pp. 43-44].

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

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

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

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

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# EXPELLED SWP MEMBERS APPEAL TO WORLD CONGRESS FOR REINSTATEMENT

by Steve Bloom

September 21, 1984

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency last week formally sent an appeal to the coming World Congress of the Fourth International, asking for its intervention and help in securing reinstatement of those who have been purged from the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. The World Congress is scheduled to be held early in 1985.

The heart of the F.I.T. appeal, dated September 18, was contained in the following two paragraphs:

"The August 4-9, 1984, convention of the Socialist Workers Party rejected the appeals for reinstatement by members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and others who have been expelled as part of the Barnes faction's political purge. In addition, the four suspended NC members--Comrades Bloom, Henderson, Lovell, and Weinstein--were expelled by the convention.

"We have no alternative now but to appeal our case to the coming World Congress of the Fourth International. We ask that congress to take the following actions: 1) urge the U.S. Socialist Workers Party to reverse its decision and reinstate the political expellees, so a genuine and democratic discussion of the differences can take place in the party and so that the unity of the Fourth International can be maintained; 2) pending such action, or in the absence of such action by the SWP, recognize that those who have been the victims of the political purge in the party remain members of the FI (to the extent this is compatible with U.S. law); and 3) take necessary organizational steps to maintain appropriate collaboration between those who have been expelled and the leadership bodies of the International."

The appeal was accompanied by a list of documents about the expulsions and the political disputes behind them, many of which have been printed in pre-

vious issues of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.

In addition to the question of what the delegates to the World Congress will do about our appeal there is also the problem of how the SWP leadership will respond if the World Congress rejects their purge and asks for the reinstatement of the expellees. To some extent, this problem is already manifest. In October 1983, shortly after the four NC minority members were suspended from the party, the United Secretariat voted by an overwhelming majority to reject the purge in the SWP and request that the party leadership reinstate the expelled members with full membership rights. The SWP leadership's answer to this reasonable request was to redouble its slanders against minority supporters and to accuse the majority members of the United Secretariat of "secret factionalism" and behind-the-scenes responsibility for the opposition in the SWP.

At the November 1983 meeting of the SWP National Committee, the party leadership demonstrated its hostility to the United Secretariat by voting to exclude its representative from the meeting. No one from the United Secretariat was allowed to attend the NC's May 1984 meeting. And the United Secretariat delegates were also barred from the SWP's 1984 national convention and educational conference last August--along with everyone else in the International who agreed that the purge in the SWP was unjustified.

The World Congress, of course, carries greater weight than the United Secretariat. But will the SWP leadership abide by the decision of the World Congress on the question of the expulsions (as well as on many other issues that will be debated there)? We cannot answer that question. We can say with certainty, however, that the result will depend--at least in part--on how firmly the World Congress acts and on how willing the SWP membership will be to let their leaders know emphatically that they do not want the unity of the International

jeopardized to advance purely factional interests.

In an article entitled "Decisions of the 32nd National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party" (SWP Information Bulletin No. 5, September 1984), Mary-Alice Waters says that one of the most important acts of the convention "was to put the final 'case closed' stamp" on the fight in the SWP that ended in a split (p. 5). But saying that the case is closed does not close it. Waters knows full well that the World Congress will take this question up. There is a broader sense, too, in which the case remains open. The fundamental question in dispute today is not the purely organizational one around our expulsions. The fight in the SWP--which has been and remains a fight to preserve our basic programmatic heritage--is not over because it has never been allowed to take place. It was blocked from the beginning by the Barnes leadership of the party, which utilized every organizational trick available to avoid a debate with those of us who opposed their programmatic changes. But the party leadership (along with any members who share their illusions that the struggle is now over) will discover that the political issues in this fight cannot be resolved by means of expulsions or organizational gimmicks. They will be forced to confront these political issues as they are posed again by new discussions in the party and in our world movement, and by the course of development of the U.S. and international class struggle.

Among other achievements cited in the Waters interpretation was the convention's unanimous vote "to reject proposals for fusion" from organizations created by expelled members after the split (Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency). It is absolutely false to say that the F.I.T. has ever proposed "fusion" with the SWP. As far as we know that is also true for Socialist Action. Waters knows this, as does every reader of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism. What we have proposed is that the SWP rescind our expulsions and restore us to membership, with the same rights and duties as any other members.

Why does Waters distort what we say and why did the convention reject something we never proposed? Because they cannot answer us on the basis of the

truth. Since the beginning of our struggle they have adopted a particular method of argument to avoid dealing with what we actually propose. First they interpret it and then they proceed to answer their own interpretation.

The case isn't closed, and the fight isn't over, despite the SWP leadership's interpretations and pronouncements. We believe that the situation in the SWP can still be changed--through persistence, principled politics, developments in the real world outside the SWP, and the discussion among Fourth Internationalists of all countries. There are a number of specific things which will help determine the outcome:

1) The F.I.T.'s first national conference will be held early in October in the Twin Cities. Delegates will meet, after a three-month discussion period, to evaluate the August SWP convention and decide on the F.I.T.'s orientation until after the World Congress. In addition the conference will be discussing the political issues before the World Congress; the antiwar/anti-intervention movement in this country and how to build it; and the F.I.T.'s organizational tasks--including the election of a national leadership to organize the work of the tendency after the conference. (We plan to print a full report of the F.I.T.'s conference in the next issue of the Bulletin IDOM, which will be dated November 1984.)

2) At the 32nd convention, the SWP leadership promised the members that after the Presidential elections the SWP internal bulletin would be opened for a discussion of the Draft Political Resolution adopted by the convention. The leadership submitted this draft to the members so late in the preconvention period that they were unable to discuss it before the convention itself. The membership has also been promised that there will be two more national conventions in the near future--one to adopt resolutions and elect delegates to the World Congress and another regular national convention next August (at which a vote is scheduled on the little-discussed Political Resolution).

3) The World Congress of the Fourth International itself should arm the whole world movement with information and documents enabling it to pass judgment on the revisionist course now being pursued by the SWP leadership.

## EMERGENCY CONFERENCE CALLS FOR ANTI-INTERVENTION ACTIONS IN SPRING

by David Williams

Cleveland, Ohio, September 16--Over six hundred people who want nothing to do with another imperialist war gathered at a conference here this weekend. The Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean was a big step forward for the anti-intervention movement and for the working class. It brought together hundreds of trade union members, religious pacifists, socialists of many political tendencies, and Hispanic and Black community activists. They decided on a program of united mass action to demonstrate opposition to the bipartisan war drive against the Central American and Caribbean people.

The conference called for a series of actions, beginning with local activities from October 20-27 to protest the occupation of Grenada on the first anniversary of the invasion. This is to be followed by local picket lines on November 10, the Saturday after the presidential election, "no matter who wins"--to put the president or new president-elect on notice that the American people have had enough promises. Only a policy of total nonintervention will be acceptable. Finally, the conference called on the entire antiwar and anti-intervention movement to unite for national demonstrations in Washington D.C., Los Angeles, and San Francisco on April 20, 1985.

The role of labor was one of the most important aspects of the conference. While it was not by any means a narrow trade union conference, the meeting was called and built primarily by people from the labor movement--rank-and-file workers, elected officials and union staff people. This is an important advance. It represents a step away from simple economic unionism towards unionism which fights for workers and oppressed people on all fronts. It represents a turn toward internationalist consciousness, summarized by a banner in the meeting room which read, "Labor solidarity has no borders."

The conference was especially significant when one considers the stage of U.S. involvement in Central America today. While one cannot minimize the U.S. role in supporting the Duarte government's war against the Salvadoran workers and peasants or the contras' war against the people of Nicaragua, the people of this country, as yet, are not suffering the effects of this war. There remains no conscription; no branch of the U.S. armed services has been ordered into combat since the invasion of Grenada. The Vietnam war, by contrast, was much wider before it provoked this much active opposition, and it was nearly at its end before any labor opposition began to surface. If Washington and Wall Street are foolish enough to believe that the memory of Vietnam is dead in this country, the Emergency National Conference gave them something to consider.

The conference participants were able to get a lot of information which the capitalist media have kept hidden from the American public. The capitalist class, its government and its news media have consistently lied about the character of the Duarte government and the war being fought in Central America. Participants in the conference will be going back to their unions and communities with the truth--that the Salvadoran people are being bombed by Duarte's North American-equipped and trained air force, that basic trade union and human rights, taken for granted by North Americans, do not exist in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras or in "free" Grenada, that the revolutionaries of Central America have no animosity to the working people of the United States, rather, their animosity is towards the U.S. ruling class--in reality our common enemy. Salvadoran fighters, such as trade union leader Francisco Acosta and guerrilla leader Mauricio Pérez gave the Central American revolution personal meaning to the people assembled in the auditorium. It is one thing to know

intellectually that bombing is going on, but it is quite another to hear about it from someone whose own home has been bombed.

The initial impetus for the conference came from Jerry Gordon, an International Representative for the United Food and Commercial Workers in Cleveland, Ohio. A small committee began getting out publicity, gathering endorsers, and making conference arrangements in May. Working committees began to develop in many other parts of the country as the conference-building began to gather momentum. Endorsements and support were received from many trade unionists, political and religious groups, and traditional peace organizations. Among these were a number of chapters of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). A representative from national CISPES and a representative from the Mobilization for Survival attended the gathering.

In contrast to this broad support for the conference and its aims, the Socialist Workers Party refused to endorse or build it. Through most of the weekend the SWP delegation did not participate at all in the deliberations. On Sunday, however, when the conference turned its attention to organizational measures to carry out the agreed-upon actions, the SWP decided to intervene. One party spokeswoman complained that Grenada had not been sufficiently discussed and spoke in favor of the October 27 action scheduled for Brooklyn, N.Y. (The conference, in its action resolution had already decided to support and build all such demonstrations.) Then two SWP members took the floor to denounce the nuclear freeze. (This had not been

endorsed by the conference and had received little, if any, attention. At no time did anyone at any plenary session speak in favor of a "mutual and verifiable freeze on production and testing of nuclear weapons" or of the freeze referendum on the ballot in many states in 1982.)

The conference was organized as a completely open and democratic assembly, with all participants having voice and vote. While this procedure is hardly the most efficient and indeed can lead to sharp and lengthy debate over less-than-important points, it gives the decisions of the gathering the greatest possible authority. The people who will be doing the work of implementing the actions decision were the ones who decided what it should be.

A broad "Continuations Committee" was elected to continue the work of the conference. It was instructed to send representatives to a September 25 meeting of established peace and justice groups and urge April 20 as a date for national united action. They were, however, authorized to change the date if necessary to maintain unity.

The conference decided not to set up a new organization, but to remain a loose, ad-hoc coalition of organizations and individuals who oppose U.S. intervention in Central America. The participants in the Emergency National Conference had no desire to replace CISPES or any of the other peace and solidarity groups which have been working all along. The decision, rather, was to work as much as possible within the existing frameworks as they exist in each local area and build one united movement against U. S. intervention.

#### UPDATE

As we are going to press with this issue of the Bulletin IDOM, we have received word that the September 25 meeting called for a national mobilization in Washington D.C. on April 13-14. This change of date was acceptable to the representatives of the Cleveland Conference Continuations Committee present there.

## THE GENDER GAP—AND WHAT WOMEN CAN DO ABOUT IT

by Evelyn Sell and Rita Shaw

### THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT TODAY

The fact that a woman is the vice-presidential candidate of a major capitalist party highlights two important aspects of the women's rights movement in the U.S. today: the profound impact of feminist struggles on our society; the strategy pursued by the leadership of the largest and most-established women's organizations.

### THE FERRARO FACTOR

Putting Ferraro on the Democratic Party ticket shows the dramatic change in attitudes toward the role of women in U.S. society -- within the brief span of fifteen years. When women's liberation emerged in organized form in 1969, the idea of a woman being "a heartbeat away from the presidency" was regarded as a bad joke or as a dream for the far-distant future. Independent feminist struggles on a wide range of issues coupled with real changes in the objective circumstances of women forced a re-evaluation and a revision of traditional attitudes about female capacities and pursuits.

Sexism is still deeply ingrained in our society but vote-hungry politicians have a long history of taking over popular issues when it serves their own narrow self-interests and when it helps keep rebels trapped within the system. In this sense, the Ferraro nomination was business-as-usual for clever politicians but millions of women see it as a breakthrough move -- legitimatizing and aiding their strivings for equal rights.

Feminist demands will neither be won nor lost by the results of the November election but women's issues have taken on an added prominence in the 1984 presidential race. The abortion issue has been receiving the most attention, but many others have also been highlighted so far in the campaign. Democrats will work to squeeze every vote possible out of supporters of women's rights while Republicans will rally anti-feminist sentiments around their Reagan-Bush ticket.

The Democrats reaped immediate benefits from their gamble with Ferraro. Mondale alone was a loser before the convention trailing 15 percentage points behind Reagan in the polls. After the convention, a Gallup poll for Newsweek magazine showed a Mondale-Ferraro ticket running ahead of Reagan-Bush by 48 percent to 46.

Significantly, anti-abortionists had seldom brought out more than a handful to heckle Mondale -- but after Ferraro became his vice-presidential candidate, Mondale has been heckled by large numbers of anti-abortionists.

According to another Gallup poll two weeks later, Reagan-Bush regained their lead: 52 percent to 42 percent for Mondale-Ferraro. This still brought the Democrats closer to the Republicans than when Mondale alone was considered. More importantly, the Republican gain was almost entirely due to picking up 10 percentage points from women (support from men rose only one percentage point).

The division between pro-Democratic women and pro-Republican women is further evidence that women are not unanimous in their political and social views even though all are oppressed as a sex. Elections reflect real processes going on in society -- not in a simple or direct way but rather like a fun house mirror presenting a distorted reflection of a real person. Feminists cannot take the support of women for granted but need to reach out to and convince women to fight for their rights. This is still a necessary task despite the growth of NOW and other feminist groups over the past fifteen years.

### THE LEADERSHIP FACTOR

When Mondale appeared before the national conference of the National Organization for Women shortly before the Democratic convention, he was greeted with chants of, "Run with a woman -- win with a woman!" The NOW leadership had played up the "gender gap" as proof that the overwhelming majority of women would support Mondale and the other Democrats. For months the

NOW leadership had swamped NOW members with letters and phone calls asserting that Reagan would be defeated by women's votes, that women would decide the 1984 election results.

Such electoral tactics have been the primary strategy of the NOW leadership since 1976 -- leading away from the early 1970s tactics of mass actions for a diversity of issues. This growing dependence on the good will of "friends in office" led to the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment when the politicians betrayed their promises and failed to deliver the constitutional amendment which was NOW's number one priority fight. This defeat was a blow to the leadership although the organization continued to attract supporters of women's rights and now boasts of having 250,000 members.

While the majority are "book" members only, many who wanted to be active were turned off by the emphasis on electoral activities. Ferraro's nomination has given the NOW leadership a big boost. Its authority has been reinforced and new life has been injected into the strategy of courting politicians, lobbying, voting for Democrats, and working within the system.

This same strategy has been pursued by other leading organizations such as CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women) and labor unions with large female membership such as the National Education Association, United Food and Commercial Workers, and AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees).

A Democratic Party win in November will immediately pull even more feminists into the orbit of capitalist politics. Even a Democratic loss will be used by conservative women leaders who will argue that a little more effort, a little more time and patience, and sure victory will come the next time around. It would be foolish not to recognize the powerful attraction of such an argument -- although feminists with a broader and more revolutionary outlook understand that women's needs will not be met through dependence on capitalist politicians or the system they serve.

#### **A POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE**

While the most influential leaders and organizations are "working within the system," the hard-won gains of the women's movement continue to be un-

enforced, attacked and, in many cases, gutted. The general situation of women in U.S. society worsens in many respects. In September the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the number of Americans living in poverty increased during 1983; the poverty rate for families headed by women with children under 18 went up to 55.4 percent. White women continue to earn about 60 percent of the amount paid to white males while Black women earn even less -- only half. Eighty percent of women workers are trapped in low-pay dead-end jobs.

At the same time, the women's rights movement remains a powerful force. The majority of women and men in this country support central feminist demands. Fightbacks are taking place and new victories are being registered as women continue to struggle. The objective conditions of life continue to change and to affect people's consciousness. For example, for the first time in U.S. history, women and minorities outnumber white males in the work force; six out of ten women with pre-school or school-age children are working; 41 percent of working women (8 million) have children under six years of age. Even traditional economists and sociologists are seriously discussing the impact of the growing numbers of women in the work force and how demands for childcare, for example, will affect the economy and the existing social structure.

The problems and setbacks as well as the tremendous potential and vigor of feminist fighters need to be taken into account in any projection of what can and should be done in the next period.

The only way to preserve past gains and to advance women's liberation is to revive the independent character of the movement. This means, first of all, involvement in uncompromising persistent struggles for feminist demands. Secondly, it means providing a solid foundation for action by educating newer layers of activists about the basic nature of women's oppression, about facts and arguments to buttress women's demands, and about the successful strategy of the movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

#### **1) CONSISTENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE**

The women's rights movement encompasses hundreds of organizations and sub-committees of organizations, and



covers many issues. This diversity requires local decisions and initiatives based on an assessment of existing groups and careful consideration of which issues warrant concentrated efforts. Prioritizing or selecting on a national basis will not fit every different situation facing feminists around the country. Opportunities for effective activity will vary greatly from city to city.

Although NOW and CLUW are intensifying their efforts in and for the Democratic Party, local conditions may point to involvement in particular chapters. The activities of a NOW or CLUW chapter depend on the women who commit themselves to active leadership and the level of consciousness of the membership.

The CLUW chapter in Seattle, for example, is working in coalitions on issues such as comparable worth, abortion rights, sexist and racist school materials, and right-wing harassment and violence. The chapter is aggressively campaigning to reach rank and file women in all unions in an effort to work with them on local issues and to recruit them to CLUW. After endorsing the National Emergency Conference Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean, the chapter took responsibility for initiating a press conference with other endorsers to publicize the issue and to inform the public about the September 14-16 conference.

Establishing or working in a union's women's rights committee has brought results in the past and should be explored at this time. This is a way of organizing and activating women politically, and of getting the union involved in issues it might otherwise ignore. Fighting sexual discrimination and harassment on the job was the central issue at the June 22-24 National Conference of Women Miners; the sixth national gathering to address women's problems in the mines.

The nation's campuses offer avenues for contacting fresh, new forces for the movement. There are numerous women's studies departments and centers in community colleges and universities. Many events take place on campus highlighting a wide range of issues. Two of the programs carried out at the University of Southern California last year were: a conference entitled "Exploring the '80s: Social and Economic Trends" co-sponsored

by the USC Asian/Pacific Student Services and the Asian Pacific Women's Network; a celebration of International Women's Day featuring a symposium with speakers from around the world, films from the Middle East and South Africa, and small group discussions.

Many young women tend to be drawn to a specific issue. The violence directed at abortion clinics has rallied women in defense of the Everett Women's Health Center in Washington state. The cutbacks in federal funding of social services has prompted young mothers to join Californians for a Fair Share (a coalition of women's organizations, and church, labor and community groups). Opposition to militarism, nuclear weapons, and the threat of war has been expressed through the formation of a number of women's groups at the national and local levels. Rape hot lines and crisis centers continue to be the focus of many women's efforts across the U.S. Once activated around one issue, women's understanding can be broadened to a more complete feminist consciousness and commitment.

## 2) EDUCATING FEMINISTS

Fifteen years ago, the initiators of the women's liberation groups which sprang up around the country had to be prepared to explain and argue for every demand they raised. For example, every facet of the abortion question had to be researched, understood, and presented convincingly in order to transform traditional attitudes and win support of the majority. Women who have not gone through that experience or who grew up during the years after the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion are often unable to justify their right to freedom of choice and don't always fully appreciate the need for persistent activity to preserve abortion rights. This is partly due to lack of experience and partly due to the fact that the authoritative leaders, such as those in NOW, turn their backs on such matters once legislation is passed or a court decision is rendered. It's necessary to once again arm women with the facts and arguments required to defend and extend gains previously won.

Fifteen years ago, feminists studied the roots and history of earlier women's struggles. Many young women coming into the movement today are not familiar with the history of even ten-

fifteen years ago. They are not aware that it was the independence and refusal to "play the game according to the rules" which characterized the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early '70s. It's necessary to tell women who don't know -- and remind women who once knew -- about the character and strategy of the movement that paved the way for the first American woman in space, the first women hired as long-shore workers, the changed treatment of rape victims, the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment in many states, and all the other firsts and accomplishments.

Knowing about this history will help educate feminists about the limitations imposed on current struggles by reliance on Democratic Party politicians. A dozen years ago liberal Demo-

crats said they supported legalization of abortion but they instructed feminists to "act like ladies, don't antagonize people in power, be patient, we'll do it for you." We didn't take their word for it but marched in the streets, held many conferences and rallies, buttonholed and berated elected officials, and won our own victories. Those same tactics need to be utilized today with the same reliance on our own strengths and independent power.

What we must do today is: propose specific events and campaigns, explain how they can be organized most effectively in order to mobilize women and their supporters, and educate activists by citing concrete examples from our earlier battles. In this way, the movement can be revitalized and move forward.

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## THE SWP'S EVOLUTION ON THE FARM QUESTION

by Dorothea Breitman

Three years ago nobody could have predicted that "The Crisis Facing U.S. Farmers and the Struggle for a Worker-Farmer Alliance" would be one of the main subjects for discussion at the 1984 SWP convention. The urgent need to combat cutbacks, layoffs and speedups, for independent political action by the labor movement, the plight of minorities and women in the face of assaults against affirmative action, the organization of an anti-war movement--all of these topics might have had top priority.

This is not to say that the farm question is of no interest or importance for revolutionaries in the U.S. today. But its elevation to top priority for the SWP in 1984 is not based on any objective significance it may have. Rather it is a reflection of the programmatic revisions which have been openly undertaken by the party leadership since the last convention in 1981. They want desperately to sidetrack any consideration of these revisions, or of the progressive withdrawal of the SWP from any meaningful activity in the mass movements. For that reason they chose to focus the internal discussion during the pre-convention period on some relatively innocuous question, i.e., the need for a worker-farmer alliance.

There certainly are states and regions where family farms exist in sizable numbers. Independent farmers are victimized by banks and large corporations, and can be attracted to a militant labor movement that concerns itself with their demands. The North Central states are this country's "breadbasket," producing the great bulk of meat and grain and accounting for 45% of the total farms. There is a history of farm struggles in this area, and of collaboration between farmers and workers. Iowa and Minnesota have been the scene of important activity by the North American Farm Alliance which tries to link the struggle of debt-ridden family farmers, hard hit by the low prices they receive for their products, to the struggles of workers against unemployment and war.

How to aid this process is an important discussion for the revolutionary party in the U.S.--and particularly in some key regions. But it hardly has the centrality given to it recently by the SWP leadership.

An article by Doug Jenness entitled, "The Crisis Facing U.S. Farmers and the Struggle for a Worker-Farmer Alliance," appeared in SWP Information Bulletin No. 2 in 1984. It was based on a report given to the SWP National Committee in February of 1982, and laid the basis for one of the main discussions at the 1984 convention. Jenness has tackled this subject before. In May of 1979 he gave a report with a more modest title, "American Agriculture and the Working Farmer." Though Jenness was already exaggerating the centrality of the farm struggle in 1979, he was then at least thinking in realistic terms about a program that could reach the family farmers.

In addition to supporting the farmers' demand for parity (the idea that the government should guarantee the full cost of production and a living income for family farmers while no subsidies should be permitted to large corporate farms and production should not be cut), the 1979 report also came out for price committees and quoted at length from Trotsky in explaining just what sort of committees were required. Medical insurance and interest-free credit provided by the government were also demanded. Jenness explained in 1979 that family farmers are among the victims of capitalism and, as such, can be won to the fight against it. They were assured that a workers' government would not expropriate them. The program put forward remained within the framework of the Transitional Program, and the report concluded with the observation that the U.S. should become a granary for the world instead of cynically using food as a weapon against hungry people.

But by 1982 Jenness's tone and approach to the question had dramatically changed and his conclusions were considerably different. Instead of a few

paragraphs outlining the state of agriculture we are treated to thirty-eight, dealing generally with the role of American agriculture in world politics, while the specific plight of the family farmer is now of considerably lesser concern. Jenness comes out against the parity demand (though still supporting a government guarantee of full production costs plus a decent living for farmers). Jenness declares that the SWP, while supporting farm struggles, is no longer for helping to save the family farm.

Capitalism, Jenness argues, must be abolished to solve agricultural problems and the SWP's main demand should be for nationalization of the land. That is the slogan which the 1982 report offers to win farmers to the side of the working class!

Jenness's erroneous approach stems from a political analysis which is aimed more toward linking up with Cuba and Nicaragua than it is concerned with the actual problems of American farmers. The 1979 report was written while the SWP leaders retained a closer connection to our movement's traditional program and method, and it is thus not as outlandishly off-base as the one in 1982. If we are to win farmers to the side of labor, we must link their present struggles with those of the workers through the

transitional method. We must support all reasonable immediate demands raised in struggle by the farmers themselves. These cannot be treated as if they were counterposed to the idea of a future socialist revolution. (For a correct approach to the farm question see the article by Christine Frank Onasch, "The Transitional Program and the Fight to Save the Family Farmer," in Bulletin IDOM #8.)

Certainly, all the statistics bear out the need to help the struggling family farmers. They may be relatively few, but they are in dire straits and are forced into direct conflict with the banks, agribusiness, and corporations. Half of the three million are renters. Many of them have large farms which require the purchase or rental of expensive machinery to run. Many farms are mortgaged to the hilt. Farmers, though they must sell their produce at low wholesale prices, must purchase what they need at expensive retail prices. Farmers are, despite their rising productivity, increasingly strapped for cash and in danger of losing their farms. Farmers have a history of struggle and organization. They have turned to the labor movement before, and they can and will do so again.

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## **PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN NICARAGUA**

**by Paul Le Blanc**

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## GERARDO NEBBIA EXPELLED FROM THE F.I.T.

[NOTE--The following are excerpts from a report on the Gerardo Nebbia case issued by the New York Local Organizing Committee of the F.I.T. It is based on discussions in the LOC on September 11, 1984, and its general line was subsequently approved by a vote of the LOC.

Gerardo Nebbia was expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in February 1984 on the charge that he was "an agent of the Healyite disruption campaign against the SWP and a member of Socialist Action." The key item linking him to the Healyites (named for the leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party in England, Gerry Healy) was a money order made out to the "Workers League Monthly Fund" (the Workers League is the U.S. organization in political solidarity with the WRP in England). For many years the Workers League and the Workers Revolutionary Party have been engaged in a slander campaign against the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party--accusing them of being agents of the FBI and the Soviet secret police.

The money order was signed "Guillermo Brown" but was allegedly found in Nebbia's apartment by his sister who said the signature looked like Nebbia's. Nebbia had been a member of the SWP since 1980, but had previously belonged to the Workers League from 1972 to 1976. After his expulsion from the SWP he joined the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

For further background on this case see the "Report on the Expulsion of Gerardo Nebbia" (Bulletin IDOM #4, pp. 24-28), and "A Dangerous Escalation of the Slander Against the F.I.T.," by Steve Bloom (Bulletin IDOM #8, pp. 10-14).]

At a meeting on September 11, 1984, the New York Local Organizing Committee of the F.I.T. heard a report from the committee we had appointed in May to investigate the charges made against Gerardo Nebbia. That committee consisted of Larry Stewart, Naomi Allen, and Carl Jackson.

On the basis of the facts established by the committee, we held a trial and took the following actions:

1) voted to find Gerardo Nebbia guilty of indiscipline and dishonesty with regard to the money order signed Guillermo Brown and made out to the "Workers League Monthly Fund," which was cashed in November of 1981;

2) found that there were insufficient grounds for sustaining the charge that Nebbia was an agent of the Workers League/Workers Revolutionary Party

disruption campaign while he was a member of the SWP;

3) rejected accepting Nebbia's resignation from the F.I.T.;

4) voted to expel him from the F.I.T. and inform him of his right to appeal to the F.I.T. national conference in October.

\* \* \*

On September 6, our investigating committee took the best available copy of the Guillermo Brown money order to a handwriting expert, an "examiner of questioned documents," in Manhattan. It selected an experienced professional person whose testimony has often been admitted in court and who has worked for the Bronx Board of Elections, the AFL-CIO, the New York City Police, and other organizations. That person told us that

Gerardo Nebbia had written the money order. We sought a second opinion from another professional in this field. On September 7 she told us the same thing. The committee was convinced that Nebbia had, indeed, written the money order.

The committee had held off on seeking opinions from handwriting experts because it was trying to get a better copy of the money order to show them. The only copy we had (from the SWP Internal Information Bulletin #1 in 1984) was a printed copy of a xerox copy of a carbon copy. An effort was therefore made to obtain a copy of the original money order from the bank. An attorney's subpoena was sent to the bank and bank officials promised to comply; but there was an extensive delay on their part. As a result, our committee decided early in September that it could not wait any longer.

At a meeting with Nebbia on September 8, two members of the committee confronted him with the evidence that he was the author of the Guillermo Brown money order. He still denied writing it, and did not offer any defense or explanation. No reasonable person, in the face of the facts, can accept Nebbia's statement. It would require a most unlikely series of circumstances which can, for all practical purposes, be ruled out.

By donating money to the Workers League, which has repeatedly demonstrated its hostility to our movement, Nebbia clearly violated the discipline of the SWP. By lying about his action both to the SWP and to the F.I.T. he has further compounded this indiscipline with dishonesty. Such actions are incompatible with membership in a Leninist organization.

Nebbia was certainly aware of the significance of his act. This is made manifest by his attempts to conceal it. He did not use his real name when he wrote the money order and he has never acknowledged it. In refusing to deal frankly with us, he has jeopardized the F.I.T.'s political effectiveness, which depends on our ability to reach the rank and file of the SWP and explain that we are the victims of a political purge by the present leadership.

The donation and the subsequent concealment of it are what Nebbia can be convicted of on the strength of the evidence. It is enough to warrant the action we have taken (and the one pre-

viously taken by the SWP) in expelling him. However, the leadership of the SWP accused him of something more than that. They said that he was an agent of the Healyite disruption campaign against the party.

Such a campaign does exist, and is a serious threat to the revolutionary movement in this country. But the accusation that Nebbia was an agent of that campaign must be proven, and the proof required goes beyond the simple fact that he contributed money to the Workers League.

Nebbia was expelled from the SWP without the opportunity to deny or disprove the charges against him. His guilt was simply asserted to the party membership without any attempt to prove it or back it up with material evidence. That method of handling a case like this one is without precedent in a Leninist organization. It betrays a distrust and contempt for the party ranks, as well as a disregard for the individual member's right to a fair hearing on the question of his guilt or innocence. (These observations are without reference to the actual guilt or innocence of Nebbia.)

An initial report on the Nebbia case was prepared for the F.I.T. last winter by a commission composed of Comrades Allen, Bloom and Breitman. It was approved by the National Organizing Committee of the F.I.T. and concluded that serious and principled revolutionists could not convict a comrade on the basis of the charges as originally presented by the SWP leadership. We assume the innocence of each member and we correctly require proof before taking disciplinary action.

There are political reasons (as distinct from purely personal or moral ones) which dictate such an attitude on our part. The party can only be harmed by the fostering of a "spy-scare" mentality which can cripple our work and drown us in suspicion. The F.I.T. acted correctly last March when it demonstratively refused to consider Nebbia guilty of anything simply on the authority of the SWP Political Committee.

The party leaders declared in February that security demanded that the case against Nebbia remain secret. However, after the initial F.I.T. protest about the lack of evidence, they decided in April to make that evidence available after all (with no known deleterious effect on party security) and published

an Internal Information Bulletin entitled, "The Gerardo Nebbia Disruption Campaign." The evidence which this bulletin contained made it possible for us to conduct a serious investigation and to make a responsible decision.

The New York LOC investigating committee actively sought the cooperation of those SWP members and leaders who played a role in developing or elaborating the case against Nebbia. Toward that end letters were sent to Barry Sheppard, Harry Ring, Selva Nebbia, and Raul G. soliciting their assistance. No reply was received to these requests, and the investigation was forced to proceed on the basis of the Information Bulletin alone.

[The investigating committee pursued many lines of inquiry and looked into all of the evidence in this bulletin which related in any way to the charge that Nebbia was an agent of the Healyite disruption campaign.] But the only inquiry which produced anything definitive--evidence upon which a realistic judgment could be made concerning the charges--was the one which related directly to the money order.

\* \* \*

The contribution of \$100 to the Workers League does not, by itself, prove that Nebbia was functioning as an agent of their disruption campaign during the time he was in the SWP. Many people who are not members or agents of organizations make financial contributions to them. It would be wrong for us to draw any conclusion which is more extreme than is actually warranted on the basis of the evidence.

It is clear that Nebbia remained politically sympathetic to the Workers League even after he became a member of the SWP--far more so than he revealed to others in the party. To some extent Nebbia's tendency in this direction was not unknown to those SWP members who worked with him. The SWP leadership had appointed a control commission to investigate Nebbia's possible association with the Healyites as a result of an incident shortly after he joined the party. (That commission found no basis for any action.) He quite openly followed the activities of the Workers League, read their press, continued to use some of their terminology, and showed an overriding interest in the theoretical issues involved in the 1953 split and the subsequent reunification

of the Fourth International. But this did not necessarily seem unnatural for someone with his background and training.

These traits would not have represented an obstacle to his continued membership in the SWP providing he acted in a disciplined and responsible way. Contributing money to the Workers League constitutes an act of indiscipline and irresponsibility. But Nebbia's political sympathy for a Healyite political point of view--even to the degree of giving them money--is still not proof that he was acting as a conscious agent of their disruption campaign against the party.

As Comrades Allen, Bloom and Breitzman state in the initial F.I.T. report on the charges against Nebbia, "It is impossible to prove the negative in such a case." This observation remains correct, and we do not claim to have made such an impossible determination--that Nebbia was not an agent of the Healyite disruption campaign. What we have found is that the evidence as it stands now is insufficient to sustain that charge.

\* \* \*

The task undertaken by the F.I.T. in this case fell on us through the complete default of the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. More than six months ago, in February, they had the physical evidence which would have allowed them to establish Nebbia's indisciplined action in the same way that we did. Had they proceeded in a calm, measured, and responsible way at that time, the evidence could have been investigated, the case against Nebbia could have been established, the appropriate action taken, and the entire development could have been presented to the membership of the party without in any way "endangering" its security. No one could have or would have questioned how the money order had been obtained under such circumstances, and in any case there would have been no need to reveal the source. The establishment of its authenticity and authorship would have been quite sufficient to justify the expulsion of Nebbia.

But the SWP leadership was not motivated simply, or even primarily, by the basic need to establish the truth. They preferred to create a factional scandal and to exploit the situation in an effort to poison the atmosphere within and around the SWP--to make a political discussion with the expelled opposi-

tion impossible. The Barnes leadership must have known in advance how the original expulsion of Nebbia as an agent of the Healyite disruption campaign, without a single solitary scrap of evidence, would be treated by serious Leninists--especially those who had themselves been the victims of frame-up expulsions from the party. The evidence was withheld originally and later revealed not out of any concern about "security," but pre-

cisely because such a method would aid their slander campaign against the opposition.

Our investigation, on the contrary, was motivated solely by a concern for the truth, and for the defense of the interests of the revolutionary vanguard in the United States. We believe we have correctly carried out this responsibility.

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## LENIN AND THE YOUTH

by Philippe Andréa

[NOTE--One of the points on the agenda of the coming World Congress of the Fourth International will concern the building of revolutionary youth organizations. The International Executive Committee, at its May 1982 meeting, opened the pre-World Congress discussion of the youth question by debating and adopting a resolution entitled "Building Revolutionary Youth Organizations in the Imperialist Countries," which was printed in International Viewpoint, No. 10, July 5, 1982.

SWP leaders who attended that IEC meeting in a fraternal status argued vehemently against the resolution, voted against it, and promised to produce their own counterresolution on the subject. More than two years later, they have yet to submit anything in writing. The differences revolve around conflicting conceptions of the correct relationship between revolutionary youth organizations and the revolutionary Marxist party.

Meanwhile, articles intended to clarify differences over how to organize the youth have been published in various publications of the Fourth International. To promote such clarification, we reprint below a translation of one of those articles that appeared in Quatrième Internationale, the French language quarterly magazine published by the IEC, No. 11, June-August 1983. The translation was done by John Cooper, who also abridged it slightly at our request and omitted the reference notes for space reasons. The same issue of QI contained a second article by Andréa on the experience of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International with youth organizations before World War II.]

The absence of democratic liberties in tsarist Russia prevented the Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), both its Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, from founding an independent youth organization. The Komsomol (Young Communist League), the youth organization linked to the Bolshevik Party, was not created until after the October 1917 revolution at the end of 1918. Nevertheless, from his earliest writings Lenin concerned himself with the youth question from three angles: (1) the student movement; (2) the inclusion, after 1899, of the youth question in the struggle for a centralized workers party; (3) the 1905-07 polemics against the German Social Democratic right wing's positions on anti-militarism and the tasks of youth organizations in that area. Throughout all this, a unified conception of the role of youth emerges in Lenin's

writings, leading to the synthesis of his conception of the youth which he put forward to the Third International in 1921.

### THE ROLE OF STUDENTS IN RUSSIA

The first student organizations appeared in Russia in 1899. In February of that year police repression provoked a general student strike in Petrograd which spread throughout Russia. Following the arrest or forced conscription of some of the students, the movement spread to layers of the working class and petty bourgeoisie who demonstrated in solidarity with the students. In the next few years the student movement continued to develop and workers strikes became more frequent. In 1901 big street demonstrations were organized on the 40th anniversary of the abolition of serfdom. Barricades were erected in the

streets of Moscow against the Cossack regiments who attacked the demonstrators. More and more workers participated in these confrontations, more than 250,000 in the huge strike wave of July 1903.

Sensing the ground shaking beneath their feet, the liberal bourgeoisie launched a campaign at the end of 1904 to obtain certain democratic liberties from the government. Unwilling to mobilize the masses, they contented themselves with a series of "banquets, resolutions, declarations, protests, memoranda, and petitions." With the same objectives in mind, the students decided to organize two street demonstrations. The students used other methods than the liberals but were isolated and subjected to violent repression. Nonetheless, it was the beginning of the 1905 revolution. These were the first political demonstrations "after the long political silence caused by the [Russo-Japanese] war" and "the grave internal situation created by the military defeat."

The second wave of the 1905 revolution, in October, also began in the universities. Large public meetings organized in Petrograd and Kiev and attended by thousands of workers paid particular attention to Social Democratic orators. Students played a prominent role in the December street fighting in Moscow. Several years of reaction followed for both the student and workers movements. Student demonstrations broke out again in 1910 following the deaths of Leo Tolstoy and Muromtsev (former president of the State Duma). A student strike against the repression spread throughout Russia in 1911. This revival of the student movement coincided with a resurgence of the Russian workers. The number of strikers rose from 46,623 in 1910 to 105,110 in 1911, a fact carefully noted by the Bolsheviks at their January 1912 conference.

Lenin attached great importance from the start to the student movement. In his fight against the "Economist" tendency inside the Social Democracy, especially in his 1902 book What Is To Be Done, he emphasized that Iskra, which he coedited, was the only Social Democratic journal that had supported the student struggle. He also showed that after three years of intermittent battle and the government's inability to keep its promises, the student struggles (aside from the "academic" ones which

raised only university demands) were being transformed into political struggles. Student struggles, in his view, could serve as "accelerators" to the mobilization of other sectors of society opposing tsarism.

Lenin returned to this question in 1903 in a polemic against the Social Revolutionaries. He divided students into four main groups: the indifferent, the academics willing to mobilize only for university demands, the reactionaries, and the revolutionaries. In his opinion, students constituted "the most responsive section of the intelligentsia ...[who] most resolutely and accurately reflect and express the development of class interests and political groupings in society as a whole."

Lenin favored assigning Social Democratic students to work in certain party circles while assigning others to try to win over majorities in the student movement and "to expand and make more conscious" every solely democratic or solely academic movement. He defended this position in a resolution to the second RSDLP congress, in 1903, saying: "If the circles are confined to the defense of solely scholastic interests, the struggle between them and those who preach not the narrowing but the widening of these interests is no less necessary and obligatory." Furthermore, the regroupment of Social Democratic students "did not signify the rupture of professional and university associations."

Drawing the balance sheet of street fighting at the end of 1905, Lenin returned to the definition of the student movement as a social current taking part in revolutionary combat.

This was the period when Lenin was elaborating his conception of the Russian revolution -- the revolution would be bourgeois but the motor force would be the proletariat and the peasantry. It was the crushing numerical majority of the peasant masses that gave the Russian revolution its "democratic" character. As for the bourgeoisie and its parties, Lenin rejected all alliances with them. Out of fear of the mass movement they were ready to make every possible compromise with the autocracy as they had shown in 1905. In this framework, Lenin defined the student movement as the "vanguard of bourgeois democracy" which "foreshadows" the much wider forces of the peasantry.

Lenin gave the same analysis in 1912 at the RSDLP's sixth conference, where he stressed the importance of student demonstrations as part of the "urban bourgeois democracy." He spoke again of the students as the "shock troops of bourgeois democracy." Thus the student movement as a whole was seen as a democratic ally of the proletariat even while Lenin fought to advance the differentiations in its midst, for the movement was also the reflection of all the groups active in society. For Lenin, the student movement was an amplified echo of what was happening in the depths of society.

In 1908 Lenin analyzed student strikes in Petrograd and several other cities as "forerunners" of a general regroupment of the working class movement. Students were seen as the group with the least material roots in the intelligentsia, and the group with the most independence in maintaining ties with the social layers from which they came. Thus the will of the working class was transmitted to other classes and immediately evoked an "unprecedented spirit" in the students.

Lenin went on to consider that "perhaps history will impose upon the students the role of initiators in the decisive struggle." This analysis permitted Lenin to write that even though the 1910 demonstrations were mainly composed of students, it was in fact "the proletariat [that] has begun" even though it swings into motion more slowly. Trotsky, in his book Stalin, was to make similar points about the relative strengths and weaknesses of workers and students in terms of their ability to mobilize and respond rapidly.

#### **BUILDING THE PARTY WITH THE NEW GENERATION**

In the 1900s Lenin saw the attraction of the Social Democratic Party to the youth. In What Is To Be Done he stressed the speed at which the youth circles of the party were growing. In 1902 he wrote a leaflet calling on high school students to turn their organizations into Social Democratic units. At the same time he was leading a struggle in the party to open it up to youth and to workers during this period of intense politicalization leading up to 1905. He insisted that the youth had to learn from their own experience. At the spring 1905 congress of the Bolshevik faction he fought against those who hid behind

certain formulations in What Is To Be Done in order to defend an elitist conception of the party. In The Crisis of Menshevism, written in December 1908, he answered a pamphlet by the Menshevik Larin. After polemicizing about several points of difference between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, Lenin wrote: "Larin complains, for example, that young workers predominate in our party, that we have few married workers and that they leave the party. This complaint of a Russian opportunist reminds me of a passage in one of Engels' works (in The Housing Question, I think). Responding to some fatuous bourgeois professor, a German Cadet, Engels wrote: 'Is it not natural that youth should predominate in our party, the revolutionary party? We are the party of the future, and the future belongs to youth. We are the party of innovators and it is always youth that most eagerly follows innovators. We are a party that is waging a self-sacrificing struggle against the old rottenness and youth is always first to undertake a self-sacrificing struggle.'... Larin himself blurts out a frank admission why he regrets the loss of the married men who are tired of the struggle. If we were to collect a good number of these tired men into the party, that would make it 'somewhat sluggish, putting a brake on political adventures.' Now, that's better, good Larin! Why dissemble and deceive yourself? What you want is not a vanguard party, but a rearguard party, so that it will be rather more sluggish. You should have said so to begin with."

On the basis of the psychological characteristics of youth Lenin justifies the composition of the revolutionary party. This polemic reminds us that the Bolshevik faction and later party were essentially composed of youth. Even the Bolshevik leadership was very young. At that time the oldest were Krasin, Lenin, and Krasikov, who were 37. The youngest were Litvinov and Zenljachka, who were 31. The average age of the nine Bolshevik leaders was 34 while that of the Mensheviks was 44. In 1917 the Bolshevik Party was even younger. The average age of the delegates at the 6th congress was 29. But the average delegate had been in the party for 8 years and 3 months.

The Bolsheviks were the most radical wing of the Russian workers movement. The party always built itself among the new generation and it was al-

ways among the youth that it reconstituted itself following periods of retrenchment or repression.

### THE ROLE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

At its 1907 Stuttgart congress, the Second International adopted a resolution, Militarism and International Conflict. It is interesting to note that this resolution was drawn up by Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Martov, although it was amended by the German delegation in order to moderate it. The German Social Democratic Party was deeply divided between, on the one hand, Karl Liebknecht, a leader of the Socialist Youth International, who had just published a strong indictment of militarism, Militarism and Anti-Militarism (which was to earn him 18 months in prison) and, on the other hand, the right wing of the party (Vollmar, Noske, etc.) who, that very year, in the debate over the military budget in the German parliament, were to give proof of their patriotism. That did not prevent the German government from dissolving the youth organizations and forbidding young people from political activity (the police went so far as to intervene in party events in order to drive out young people and mothers with nursing infants). These measures again raised the debate over the necessity of the parties in the Second International to sustain anti-militarist activity directed at the youth.

The right wing of the German Social Democracy justified its refusal of all

anti-militarist activity by the fact that, militarism being caused by capitalism, "there is no need for specific anti-militarist agitation," that it is sufficient to overthrow capitalism! The left-sounding formulation, used to cover an opportunistic policy, is an old social-democratic trick!

Lenin joined this debate, using the example of the Belgian Young Socialist Guard. He explained how the Belgian party created an autonomous group from the bottom up, with its own press, its own base, its own leadership, whose essential activity was to address the young recruits. Some soldiers' unions were even created within the barracks to pursue propaganda there.

In an article written some months earlier, Lenin returned to the balance sheet of the Stuttgart Congress in light of the activity of several unions of young socialist workers. For Lenin, anti-militarist propaganda must be directed at youth before they entered the army since the basic training there terrorized the soldiers and made political work much more difficult later on. The youth groups of Belgium, Austria, and Sweden should devote to this work, according to Lenin, "still more time and effort" even though they were created with the goal of "giving a coherent vision of a socialist world" to the new generation along with the practical activity of defending apprentices faced with repression and exploitation.

## A REVEALING CORRESPONDENCE

[NOTE--We thought that readers of the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism would be interested in the following 1982 exchange of correspondence between Rita Shaw, then a member of the SWP in Seattle, and the party National Office in 1982. It illustrates two points: 1) the unwillingness of the party leadership at that time to discuss our criticisms of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR--in particular with regard to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and 2) their attitude toward a rank-and-file member of the party who was seeking clarification of a political problem. The refusal of the present party leadership to commit itself to a particular viewpoint in writing--even in response to a specific inquiry--is by no means limited to this particular incident.]

August 1, 1982

Political Bureau  
Socialist Workers Party

Comrades,

I am writing in regard to a discussion that my branch organizer, Dennis R. , had with me on July 21st of this year that I find confusing and disturbing. He explained that I was called in because of some remarks I had made during the discussion period of a forum we held a few weeks earlier on Palestine and the Israeli invasion that bothered some comrades.

The background for my comments was initially a question from a member of the audience as to why Israel at this time would feel free to take this military action (in spite of the stated U.S. restrictions on arms' use and open support of the the P.L.O. by the U.S.S.R.). Our party speaker, Mike, very thoroughly answered the question in regard to the role of U.S. imperialism, it's aims in the middle east, its war drive in Central America, and how out of these policies Israel could draw the obvious conclusion that their actions would not be seriously opposed by the United States.

My comments followed this exchange. basically what I said was that Israel also did not really believe that they would have to contend with any serious or military intervention from the U.S.S.R. That although the Soviet Union had supported the struggle of the P.L.O. by supplying weapons and training, Israel could draw the conclusion that they would only "go just so far" in their defense of the Palestinians. This conclusion could be drawn, for example, by the observation of the Soviet bureaucracy's recent behavior in regard to its role and demands of helping to crush the Polish workers' Solidarity movement.

Those were my remarks which Dennis, in our meeting, told me were "out of line." I asked him if the remarks were politically incorrect and was answered by being told that it is not what the party was saying. This was illustrated to me by stating that I wouldn't find this in any of the articles in the Militant. He went on to explain that we do not raise this issue in a united front situation with the Palestinians, especially not at a public forum. I was also informed that if I had identified myself as a member of the Socialist Workers Party when speaking from the floor, he as the organizer and "floor leader" would have been compelled to get up and publicly denounce and deny my statement.

Our meeting ended with his admonishment to me to be careful in the future as to what and when I say anything. I found his comments to be politically questionable, intimidating and a form of harassment. But I am also genuinely confused.

I am asking for clarification from you on what is our political line in regard to how the Soviet Union and its bureaucracy is viewed regarding this situation. Is it a policy of ours now that we may have a certain political analysis of something like this situation but not say or print it where it may be heard or read by anyone outside our own party?

Since I was told what not to say and that my comments were "out of line," would have to be "denounced and denied" as the party position, I would like to know what we would say on this question.

I look forward to an answer from you on these questions.

Comradely,

Rita Shaw

August 31, 1982

Rita Shaw  
Seattle

Dear Comrade Shaw,

This is in reply to your letter of August 1, 1982.

You ask, "Is it a policy of ours now that we may have a certain political analysis of something like this situation [in Lebanon] but not say or print it where it may be heard or read by anyone outside our own party?"

No, that is not a policy of ours.

Our analysis and line on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, as well as our analyses of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratic caste there, are contained in extensive articles on the subjects in the Militant and Intercontinental Press.

It sounds from your description that the Seattle branch, like many others around the country, held a successful protest forum that succeeded in drawing in Palestinian representatives, against the U.S.-backed Israeli aggression.

Comrade R assured us on the phone that he had no intention of intimidating or harassing you in the discussion he had with you, and considers the matter over and done.

Comradely,

Andrea Morell  
for the Secretariat  
of the Political Committee

September 30, 1982

Political Bureau  
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades,

I am in receipt of the letter dated August 31, 1982, signed by Andrea Morell that was the reply to my inquiry of 8/1/82.

It is frustrating to have received a reply that does not answer anything, and what it (the reply) does say is even more confusing to me.

After re-reading my original inquiry and the reply I thought it best to once again raise my specific questions and to try to make it very clear what they are. Photocopies of my letter of 8/1/82 and your reply of 8/31/82 are enclosed in order to be immediately available for your review together with this current letter, and also so that I shall not have to repeat the points of the discussion with Dennis R. that originally raised the questions I posed.

QUES. #1 Is what I said about the Soviet Union in relation to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon not our political line?

QUES. #2 If what I said is politically incorrect, what is the correct political line?

QUES. #3 Is it politically "out of line" for a member of the S.W.P. to publicly make remarks that are critical of the role of the Soviet bureaucracy when it is: [A] relevant to issues where we are involved in a united front situation, such as the specific example of our mutual defense and support with the Palestinian representatives of the P.L.O. against the Israeli invasion, and/or [B] at public forums where such issues are being discussed?

In re-reading the Militant and I.P. as suggested in your letter I find, of course, many articles that deal with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon but do not find in any of them our analysis and line on the subject of the relationship and political role of the Soviet Union and its bureaucratic caste to the struggles of the Palestinian peoples and the invasion of Lebanon by Israel. It is therefore easy to conclude that Dennis was correct when he told me that my remarks were "out of line," justifying this by pointing out that comments critical of the political role of the Soviet leadership do not appear in our press.

This then leads me to my next, and last, question.

QUES. #4. If we do have a programmatic analysis and line of understanding what the role of the Soviet Union and its bureaucratic caste in relationship to the struggles of the Palestinian peoples and the invasion of Lebanon by Israel has been, is, or should be; then where and when should it be presented? (Not to be construed as meaning at all times, but rather, sometimes given certain subjective and objective conditions.) Is it correct to include it in [A] pertinent articles in the Militant, [B] pertinent articles in Intercontinental Press, [C] internal Party discussion bulletins, [D] statements by Party spokespersons at public meetings, [E] statements by Party representatives participating in united front committees, [G] statements by Party members to individuals or groups not in the S.W.P., [H] statements in internal party meetings.

Comrades, I do not intend being sarcastic by phrasing the above question as a form of multiple choice. It is the only way I could come up with of trying to clearly state what is being asked since my original inquiry was misunderstood and subsequently not answered.

Since neither your reply of 6/31/82 nor my reading of the Militant or I.P. has resolved anything that I initially wrote about: The issues in question and confusion still exist and I see this as a serious situation. The political admonishment and warning to me by my branch organizer over statements I made that were politically critical of the Soviet Union still are in effect. Unless the questions listed above are clarified, then the possibility of any statement that I or any other comrade might make that is believed to be part of our programmatic beliefs could be used as proof of individual "disloyalty" or similar charges. Unless this potential cause and effect is intentional, and I doubt that it is, then it is urgent that you address these specific questions clearly and unambiguously.

As matters stand now, the whole discussion and questions it raises that I have written you about still hangs over me as a form of political intimidation and harassment, regardless of Dennis' stated intentions. This is especially true since this "correction" warning follows a prior



meeting with my organizer in March of this year where it was requested that I cease and desist from taking personal notes during political discussions in the branch meetings.

I look forward to receiving your answers to my questions.

Comradely,

Rita Shaw

October 7, 1982

Rita Shaw  
Seattle

Dear Comrade Shaw,

Concerning your September 30 letter, we have nothing to add to our previous letter to you dated August 31. If you believe you have political differences with or questions about any aspects of the political line on Lebanon that the party has been running in our press, the appropriate place to raise them is in the internal discussion bulletin that will open prior to our convention next year.

Comradely,

Andrea Morell  
for the Secretariat  
of the Political Committee

## **FRANK LOVELL ON THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE PARTY PURGE, FEBRUARY 1983**

[NOTE--The coming World Congress of the Fourth International will be asked to sustain the appeals for reinstatement of many members expelled by the American Socialist Workers Party during the last two years. The SWP leadership contends that none of the expelled were purged because of their political views; that all of them were ousted only because they had violated the SWP's discipline and organizational norms. These claims are completely disproved by the following letter by Frank Lovell, which has never been published before. His letter concerns a specific case of expulsion that took place at the beginning of the purge that decimated the SWP from 1982 to 1984--the case of Anne Zukowski. It is a case which is typical of others to follow but at the same time it is unique because in her instance the leaders of the SWP admitted, in an unguarded moment, the truth about their own motivations in the expulsions.]

Anne Zukowski was expelled in November 1982 by the 8-member Minnesota Iron Range branch acting as a "trial body." She held dual membership in the SWP and the Young Socialist Alliance. The branch organizer's report against her and the conduct of the trial indicated that the whole case was managed in consultation with the party center in New York.

Zukowski appealed to the Political Committee on November 26 to reverse her unjust expulsion. The Barnes faction delayed action on her appeal until February 18, 1983. During those three months the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the NC clamored for a discussion of her case in the NC, but discussion was blocked and bottled up in the PC. The February 18 PC minutes say only: "Anne Z. appeal. Waters reported. Motion by Waters: To uphold the decision of the Iron Range branch in finding Anne Z. guilty and expelling her from the SWP for violation of the party's organizational principles and of the motion adopted by the February-March 1982 NC meeting concerning the conduct of party members in the YSA."

This brief notice gave the green light to additional expulsions on trumped-up charges in other branches. The Waters report was never published. But Lovell, the last oppositional member of the PC, was present at the PC meeting and heard the unpublished arguments of Waters and Barnes justifying Zukowski's expulsion because of the "different political positions and opinions" she had expressed in June 1982 when she signed an oppositional document in the SWP. Lovell then wrote his letter to the NC and the PC reporting what Barnes and Waters had said at the PC so that it would be part of the record as the Zukowski appeal was submitted to higher bodies.

For daring to write this letter, Lovell was accused of violating the "confidentiality" of the PC, an action so heinous that it was cited as the basis for removing him from the PC at the next NC meeting. But nobody claimed that Lovell had misrepresented what Barnes and Waters had said at the February 18 PC meeting.

The document that Zukowski signed in June 1982 was a letter to the PC and NC by 18 SWP members who announced their desire to form a "Fourth Internationalist Tendency in order to be able to participate collectively in the international discussion and to advance our views on disputed international questions in an organized and responsible way." (See Bulletin IDOM #3, p. 6, for complete text.) All 18 signers were expelled on one pretext or another in the year following Lovell's letter. They appealed to the SWP convention in August 1984, which turned them down unanimously. Their next recourse is the World Congress, due early in 1985.]

New York  
February 25, 1983

To the National Committee and the Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

When the PC acted on February 18 to reject Comrade Anne Zukowski's appeal against her expulsion last November by the Iron Range branch, Comrade Mary-Alice Waters, reporting for the Secretariat, said that educational material on this case must be prepared for the membership (presumably in an internal bulletin). In further discussion of this matter, Comrade Jack Barnes agreed that perhaps the Zukowski case can be used for educational purposes, but it can't be done now, not until after the anti-SWP trial in Los Angeles.

I agree that the Zukowski case presents some crucial issues for the future of our party.

As part of the educational material on this case, I ask that the following be included: Comrade Zukowski's appeal to the PC on November 26, 1982, with attachments dated November 17 and November 26; plus this letter of mine, in which I repeat and extend arguments I made at the February 18 PC meeting.

Since I am reasonably sure that Comrade Zukowski will appeal the PC's Feb. 18 decision to the NC or the convention, I would like to have this letter transmitted to whatever body will hear the appeal, even if no educational bulletin is issued on this subject.

# # # # #

According to my notes, Comrade Waters in her report to the PC stated that Zukowski was expelled for "a violation of discipline, for an action she took and defended." But the undisputed facts show that she did not violate discipline and she did not take any "action."

When Comrade Sue Smith, a nonparty YSAer, asked Anne if she would give a preconvention report to the YSA chapter meeting, Anne Zukowski said she didn't know if she should since she had disagreements with the YSA draft political resolution; she urged Smith to consult the YSA chapter executive committee and said she would give a report if the executive wanted her to. When Smith asked her about her disagreements, Zukowski declined to discuss them.

In her report Comrade Waters stated that Zukowski "contends that it would have been dishonest and disloyal for her to undertake to defend the YSA draft resolution under the circumstances," and that this demonstrates that Zukowski "does not understand that she was assigned to help build the YSA -- along the lines decided by the majority leadership of the SWP. Her refusal to do this is what is involved in this case." Zukowski's contention "goes to the heart of the matter," according to Waters.

This argument omits some of "the circumstances" that were most relevant and avoids the real issue, the question of a specific assignment. At the time of this incident there was considerable confusion in the SWP about whether or not dual members would be allowed to present differences they might have in the YSA preconvention discussion period. The responsibility for this lies with the PC, not Zukowski.

Some members had asked the PC to release them from party discipline for the YSA preconvention discussion period. The PC refused to give the releases requ-

ested but left the question open for further discussion. At the same time the PC took the position, for the first time in history, that it was not normal for such releases to be granted, although in the past they have usually been given when requested. The confusion was so great that at the time of the Iron Range incident the organizer of the YSA, an experienced party member, did not know and could not tell Zukowski what the PC position was on releases for the YSA discussion period that was already half-concluded. If problems arose from this confusion, the PC deserves most of the blame.

I agree that it would not have been "dishonest and disloyal" for Zukowski to present the SWP's position on any and all questions in the YSA if she were assigned to do that in a report at a YSA meeting. But she was given no such assignment. The party did not assign her to report on the YSA resolution. She was merely asked if she would give such a report by a non-party member of the YSA. The charge that she failed to carry out her obligation "to build the YSA" is vague and groundless because she was never accused of refusing to carry out any assignment either in the SWP or the YSA. The fact is that she was never assigned by the SWP or the YSA to give a report, and that she told Smith she would give a report if the YSA executive asked her to do so, even if she thought she would not be the best one to do it.

It is impossible, after reading the Iron Range executive committee's report at the trial, not to see that Zukowski was accused of violating discipline not because of anything she did, but because of what she thinks, and especially her failure to foresee and to accept the executive committee's bizarre interpretation of recently adopted "norms." She evidently was expected to determine in advance what the branch executive committee might eventually decide her motives were -- that is, she was expected to be a mind reader. Members of the executive committee managed to convince themselves that she was involved in some devious plot for suggesting that a supporter of the YSA resolution would probably be a better reporter on it to the YSA membership than she would be. She had no way of knowing at the time that she would be accused of doing anything wrong.

One other point raised in the Waters report concerned the relation between the offense charged and the penalty imposed. Comrade Waters (and the PC) held that expulsion was warranted. On the contrary it is completely inappropriate. Expulsion is hardly a fitting punishment for such a minor offense as stating the fact of one's disagreement with a document produced by the YSA leadership. If Zukowski deserves to be expelled, it must be for some other reason than the one stated and argued in the trial. Even if it is decided that she did commit some sort of indiscretion (for which there is no evidence whatever), then it is the height of folly to order expulsion or uphold expulsion for such an indiscretion, which easily could have been cleared up in any normal branch situation without any charges being preferred. Expelling Zukowski for her statement to Sue Smith and for the entirely unrelated matters brought up at the trial is like sentencing someone to be hanged for spitting on the sidewalk and for complaining that spitting should not be treated as a capital crime.

We should try to understand the disagreements and antagonisms that develop in small branches, especially when a branch is operating under such difficult conditions as exist on the Iron Range today. The record shows that Anne Zukowski and her companion were harassed because of their political differences long before the incident for which she was expelled. This indicates that there were other reasons for her expulsion than those formally charged.

The central leadership of the party (the PC) ought to be directing the branch's attention to the big problems workers face today instead of encouraging

internal friction and recrimination. Fifty percent of the workers on the Range are unemployed. This is the problem the branch should be interested in trying to explain and helping to organize union action around for the creation of jobs and other forms of relief.

We know from the Iron Range branch minutes that the Twin Cities branch organizer was present on the Range when Zukowski was being tried for indiscipline (if not at the branch meeting where she was expelled). We also know that shortly thereafter similar charges were preferred against a comrade in the Twin Cities branch and a similar trial was held there. This indicates that the atmosphere of internal repression created by the harassment of Zukowski on the Range had spread to the Twin Cities.

But there was one important difference in what happened at the Twin Cities branch: there the membership overwhelmingly refused to support the recommendation of a majority of the executive committee to expel the comrade accused of violating discipline. As in the Zukowski case the charge was specious and the punishment was excessive and inappropriate. The PC ought to reconsider and reverse the action of the Iron Range branch just as the Twin Cities branch reversed the position of the Twin Cities executive majority. This was a clear demonstration that such charges cannot be explained or justified to the party membership whenever there is an opportunity for them to be aired objectively.

# # # # #

After I spoke at the February 18 PC meeting along the lines indicated above, Comrade Barnes expressed his views in favor of upholding the expulsion. Since time allotted for this agenda point had been exceeded, I did not respond to what he said. But I want to report here one of the points he made that I consider important, and to offer my comment on it in writing.

# # # # #

Comrade Barnes strongly disagreed with my assessment that the Iron Range expulsion and the attempted Twin Cities expulsion involved the same issue. He said he thought a careful examination would reveal a "fundamental difference" between the two cases. While he did not state plainly or directly what he considered the difference to be, he did make clear how he and the PC see things by some of his remarks which I summarize in the following two paragraphs:

If we fail to follow up on cases of this kind there will be no discipline in the party. We all know and agree that everyone is obligated to carry out party policy. But for those in the party today who disagree with the party's policy as adopted in the last convention and plenums since then, as interpreted and carried out by the party leadership, the whole question of what the party policy really is remains "up in the air." We cannot allow this because then everything will be up in the air and nothing can be done.

In the document drafted by the 18 comrades, we find extremely different political positions and opinions from those of the party leadership. We must be guided now by decisions taken at our plenums. This is a most important matter. At our plenums we issued warnings to comrades with different political views. Anyone who

disregards those warnings and violates our party norms as defined by our plenum decisions must be immediately expelled. This is what we did in the case of Michael Smith who violated a specific "last warning." We must take the same action in the case of all others.

It is plain, therefore, that Comrade Barnes's alleged "fundamental difference" between the Iron Range expulsion and the attempted Twin Cities expulsion consists of the fact that Anne Zukowski was a signer of the letter of the 18 comrades to the PC last June 29 (see text in Internal Information Bulletin, Sept. 1982, p. 154), and that the defendant in the Twin Cities case was not a signer of that letter.

In her appeal to the PC, Zukowski expressed the opinion that the real reason she was expelled was because of her minority views as expressed in her signature to the letter of the 18. I did not enter into this question at all at the Feb. 18 PC meeting. But I now feel compelled to tell you that after Barnes's remarks at that meeting, there is no question in my mind that Zukowski was correct in her explanation for the expulsion and that other comrades with "different political positions and opinions from those of the party leadership" (including both signers and non-signers of the letter of the 18) are threatened with similar harsh and vindictive punishment unless the NC or the convention will override the PC's Feb. 18 decision in the Zukowski case.

The PC's decision sends the wrong signal to the party branches. It tells them that they have a green light to go after anyone with "different political positions and opinions," no matter how flimsy the charges. The signal that is needed is one ~~that tells the branches~~ that tells the branches that they must scrupulously uphold and defend the democratic centralist practices and traditions of the SWP, especially on the eve of a preconvention discussion period. In the interest of the party as a whole, I urge the NC to reverse the PC's decision and reinstate Comrade Zukowski to full membership status and rights.

Meanwhile, I urge the members of the NC to consider (and PC members to reconsider) the full implications of the doctrine espoused by Comrade Barnes at the February 18 PC meeting. The letter of the 18, which I signed along with Zukowski and others, announced our intention to participate collectively in the international discussion through the preparation of documents for the International Internal Discussion Bulletin. In a letter to the 18 on July 13, 1982, the PC instructed us "to cease and desist from any further organized tendency activity of any kind. Any violation of this instruction is incompatible with membership in the SWP." (International Information Bulletin, Sept. 1982, p. 155) While disagreeing with the PC's interpretations, we pledged to comply with the cease-and-desist order until it had been changed or lifted. No one has charged that this pledge has been violated by any of the 18, and no charges of violating the cease-and-desist order have been filed against any of the 18. But now the July 13 order is being given a new interpretation, and the 18 are being threatened with immediate expulsion, not for violating that order, but for "offenses" that are at most analogous to spitting on the sidewalk. How can we have the SWP's traditional democratic discussion in the coming preconvention period with such threats and harassment being encouraged in branches where there are members with "different political positions and opinions"?

Comradely,

  
Frank Lovell

## **JAMES P. CANNON ON THE BIRTH OF AMERICAN TROTSKYISM**

The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31: Writings and Speeches by James P. Cannon. Ed. Fred Stanton. Monad Press. Distributed by Pathfinder Press, New York, 1981, 446 pp., \$8.95 paperback.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Cannon's death. With a decade's perspective it is now safe to rank him as one of the handful of great American Marxist leaders and teachers.

During his days of political activity in the early Communist Party and in the founding and leading of the American Trotskyist movement, of which he was the driving force, he was regarded by most chiefly as an orator and organizational expert. To be sure, he was superlative in both those capacities but he was not considered one of the movement's talented writers.

Reading this book and the other collections of his writings that have appeared since his death impels one to revise that opinion. Though the Trotskyist movement in North America had, for its small size, a relatively large number of capable, and some talented, writers, Cannon now emerges as the best of them.

The force of his writings comes not from any artistry of style or display of theoretical erudition--he probably never even thought in those terms--but from the directness, density and compelling purposefulness of the thought embodied in the words.

Cannon teaches on political and organizational matters not by precepts, prescriptions and rules, but by elucidation and analysis of the problems confronted in the light of the past experience of the labor and socialist movements. Thus the reader is educated on the whys, wherefores, and hows for dealing with comparable current problems. And throughout, his writings are marked by purity of motive, their high plane of

political morality--with absolutely no bombast or pettiness--and their constant revolutionary purpose.

Those who remember him as a platform speaker will catch echoes in these letters and articles of those features which made him such a joy to hear--humorous descriptions and turns of phrase almost worthy of Mark Twain (see, for example, his piece "The Lost Leader"), flashes of biting wit and satire, and inspiring passages on the revolutionary socialist movement's great aims for all humanity.

The period covered by this volume is the three years from the expulsion from the Communist Party to the end of 1931. Constituting themselves as an expelled faction of the CP, the expelled Oppositionists tried to get the hearing from the CP members that the party bureaucrats had denied them. Thus the burden of Cannon's writings were an explanation of the ideas of his group and a running critique of the policies of the CP leadership as they zigzagged from the right-centrist line of Pepper-Lovestone to the abrupt introduction of the "Third Period" with its suicidal "social-fascist" line and adventure in dual unionism.

But in the consolidation of the expelled Oppositionists into a stable functioning body and in keeping them abreast of national and world events, Cannon also wrote on such matters as the labor upsurge in the South, defense of labor prisoners and defendants, events in Germany and the USSR, the revival of the American Socialist Party, and the appearance of noteworthy books. Serious students of labor history and Marxism will find much of value in the accounts of the coal miners' struggles, the textile strikes in Passaic, Gastonia, and Paterson, and the problems in organizing the needle-trades workers in New York.

Of particular pertinence for today are the articles dealing with the united front and democratic centralism in the revolutionary party.

The overabundance of quotable material in this volume puts a reviewer in a quandary, but in view of the degenerative process which has begun in the Socialist Workers Party, which still claims formal adherence to the teachings of its founder, perhaps the following will be apropos:

"The Communist Party is not a debating society.' Behind this statement, true enough in itself, all the bureaucrats who fear discussion seek to hide their incompetence. We communists are not a group of interminable debaters. Neither are we an army of voting robots. The automatic hand raiser is no communist any more than the undisciplined, endless talker. The one of these conceptions is just as far away from Leninism as the other. We hold to the principle of democratic centralism just as firmly as we reject the suppression of discussion and the substitution of official commands for ideological and political leadership." (p. 53)

"The worker communist must be able to feel at home in his own party. He must have the right and feel the freedom to open his mouth and say what he thinks without being called into the office of some party official or other, like a recalcitrant workingman in a factory, and threatened with discipline. All talk of party democracy in the face of suppression on all sides and the wholesale expulsion of comrades for their views is a swindle. The party needs a real and free discussion." (p. 73)

"The action of the convention in rejecting our appeal [against expulsion] and denying us the right to be heard, will naturally have no influence in halting this determination [of the Opposition to continue its struggle]. The convention, which was packed and prearranged by the mechanical exclusion of the Opposition, accomplished nothing whatever except to demonstrate again the bankruptcy of the regime. Formal decisions arrived at in this way cannot

be taken as a substitute for conclusions based on free collective work of revolutionaries." (pp. 142-3)

"We will continue, as before, to base ourselves primarily on the party and the left-wing workers immediately under its influence. The great bulk of the revolutionary workers are there, and this fact determines our position as a faction of the party, not as another party. We do not identify the proletarian revolutionaries in the party and the left wing with its corrupted upper stratum." (p. 258)

"We have already defined the role and tasks of the Opposition for the period at hand. Our fight is an intransigent fight for principle as a faction of the party. So we decided at the [CLA] conference and again at the plenum. Under the given conditions this view condemns us for the moment to the position of a comparatively small group and decrees our activity to be mainly propagandistic and critical. Along this line we must have the perspective of a long and stubborn struggle....This perspective is a hard one and so is the fight. But we can escape from it only at the cost of principle, and this means, in the end, disintegration and defeat. Our strength is our platform! If we forget that, we are lost. And yet that is precisely the mistake made by those who seek a way out of the situation by a shortcut under the enticing but thoroughly false slogan of 'mass work.'" (p. 290)

"They dishonor and distort Lenin who reduce his teachings to a system of lifeless formulae. The thing is to grasp their living essence, and its application to our own time and place. In other words, to study his writings not as pedants but as revolutionaries." (p. 331)

The introduction to this volume by Fred Stanton gives the reader the national and international background to the events that led to the expulsion of Cannon from the CP and the consolidation of the expelled faction as the Communist League of America. A useful glossary and notes are also supplied.

George Lavan Weissman



## THE FEAR OF MAKING MISTAKES

Editor:

As a long time member of the SWP (now expelled) I am quite struck by one aspect of this year's Draft Political Resolution which I have not yet heard or seen much comment on. The sections which concern work in the trade unions seem to deal overwhelmingly with warnings about things that revolutionists should not do. Don't get involved in power caucuses! Don't make the mistake of thinking that anything can be won with the present leadership! Don't try to substitute yourself for the class-struggle left wing that doesn't exist! Don't run for union office if there isn't already a militant and active base of support! Don't do this or you will sink into the swamp of reformism and economism! Don't do that or you will end up like the ultraleft sectarians!

I haven't checked to see exactly which of these don'ts are actually in this year's resolution, and which I just remember from past reports and resolutions, but there is no doubt that the overwhelming message which a party member in a union fraction gets these days is: "Be careful!" "Watch out!" "The next step you take may be your first on the road to perdition." The consequence of this can only be to stifle initiative and encourage withdrawal to pure propaganda around completely "safe" ideas--such as those that are published in the Militant or are contained in the speeches of party leaders.

What a far cry from the past, when the party saw union work as an important arena in which young members could learn through their own experience, and gain some self-confidence as independent thinkers and activists. The SWP's current overwhelming fear of making mistakes has nothing in common with a Leninist trade-union policy (not to mention work in other mass arenas). In fact, party members will learn more from making mistakes, recognizing and correcting them as a result of trying to analyze a problem and acting on her or his own than they ever will by getting instructions from "leaders" on every question (or worse, not doing anything at all except waiting and watching from the sidelines).

It is highly unlikely that trade union activists who are functioning on the basis of the best interest of the

union and of the workers will do themselves serious damage, even if they get involved in a project that turns out to be a mistake. Most militant workers would rather get to know people who do something, even if it turns out to be the wrong thing. It's not too hard to discover an error and correct it, and the benefits gained in developing an experienced, self-reliant cadre far outweigh the small risks.

--A union activist

## ROHATYN'S DILEMMA

Editor:

I have wanted for some time now to send the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism a brief note on Adam Shils's article about Felix Rohatyn (Bulletin IDOM #7, p. 35). And so, I have finally found the time to do it.

First, congratulations are in order as Adam rightly sees the importance in paying attention to the thoughts of such an individual. And of course, I fully realize the imposing limitations of space required by the journal; so, thus, you can only say so much. However, I felt there was one important inadequacy to your article.

Rohatyn necessarily must be a nationalist. We must remember that one of the central pillars of modern capitalism is the nation-state with its own respective national bourgeoisies. This recognition is absolutely crucial for a Trotskyist for it points to the inability of the third world to find "a third way." That is, the underdeveloped world is unable to create a stable nation-state, Jack Barnes and his democratic dictatorship notwithstanding. Likewise, the advanced industrial countries are only able to survive endemic economic crises, in the final analysis, through nationalist, anti-liberal, economic and political strategies (e.g., although Rohatyn is wont to admit it, this so-called liberal must oppose free trade, and in so doing actually oppose the efficiency of industrial plant and processes which the free market would impose). The debates between Rohatyn and the Republican economists are of secondary significance. They both must ultimately agree on trade protectionism and a pillaging of the underdeveloped world. Thus, for example, to take up a specific reference in your article, there can be no viable American steel industry, or

for that matter shipbuilding industry or for that matter domestic copper industry (all three crucial for, e.g., war production) without nationalist trade barrier restrictions, which limit and restrict the efficiency of capitalist production by eliminating competition. I felt you should have mentioned this in your article.

It is the contradiction between the potential of a worldwide division of labor (e.g., let the Japanese and Koreans produce the world's steel, the Chileans the world's copper, etc.) and the existence of nation-states which runs at the heart of the Marxist critique of capitalism. Rohatyn's plan essentially must reduce itself as a means to throw foreign workers out of work through his attempt to "rationalize" American production. This will result in foreign unemployment; the respective foreign ruling classes will respond with their own form of rationalization, i.e., trade barriers, and ultimately this will lead to a war over captive markets.

Even an American economy of "xerox copiers" will not make it without nationalist protectionism. After all, the Japanese are already better in the copier business and the EEC is bringing suit against IBM. For these problems, Rohatyn has no answer.

--A reader

## TWO SERIOUS OMISSIONS

Editor:

The biggest crime committed by the SWP leadership at the 32nd National Convention on August 4th to 9th was a crime of omission. "One of the biggest changes in our movement," as SWP leader Jack Barnes phrased it in an 80-page article in the first issue of the New International, was not on the agenda at the convention. That was the proposal to "discard permanent revolution." This proposed major change has therefore never been codified or formalized by any convention of the SWP. Nevertheless, the permanent revolution has in effect been discarded simply by the dictate of the SWP leadership.

Furthermore Mary-Alice Waters, in her major report on the "Workers and Farmers Government: A Popular Revolutionary Dictatorship," in the only reference to political revolution in the deformed workers states, said, "As for the question of political revolution, we will put that aside." Put aside the political revolution, a major tenet of Trotskyism? This question was all the more important since the SWP for a long time has made virtually no mention of this central position. Where does the SWP stand on political revolution in the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states? Again, it was not part of the convention agenda.

It seems to me that the Bulletin IDOM has been remiss in not pointing this out in its last issue assessing the convention. After all, what is the central dividing line between the SWP and the FIT?

--A supporter

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