

INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

Africa

Asia

Europe

Oceania

the Americas

Vol. 23, No. 18

September 23, 1985

USA \$1.25 UK £0.80

New Stage in South Africa Struggle



Anti-apartheid march by supporters of mass-based United Democratic Front.

**Australian SWP Leaders Declare
Split From Fourth International**

Sandinistas deal blows to U.S.-backed contras

By Steve Craine

Mercenary forces in Nicaragua have suffered setbacks in recent attempts to carry their counterrevolutionary war into new parts of the country. They had launched these attacks following the renewal of open aid from Washington.

According to Nicaragua's defense minister, Humberto Ortega, "Sandinista troops are continuing to deal systematic blows" to the *contra* forces. He said the contras are now facing "an irreversible process of moral and operational decomposition." In the first half of this year some 2,300 contras have been killed.

In early August, two *contra* raids in central Nicaragua were presented in the U.S. big-business press as major advances for the anti-Sandinista forces. The *Washington Post* called it "the rebels' most effective week in more than three years of fighting." But the facts about these raids and other developments in the war prove this view wrong.

The first and largest of the two attacks came on August 1 against the town of La Trinidad, some 80 miles north of Managua on the Pan-American Highway. About 200 attacking mercenaries were held at bay for three hours by 30 members of the local Sandinista militia. When a company of the Sandinista People's Army's Irregular Warfare Battalion arrived, they drove the contras out of town.

Lt. Ricardo Centeno, head of the La Trinidad militia, explained that the contras "didn't accomplish their key objective, which was to be able to say they'd taken the town, even if they had to leave an hour later." Even the secondary objective of the invaders — destroying grain silos and a bridge — proved unattainable.

Eight militia members, four workers from the Ministry of the Interior, the head of the local Sandinista Defense Committee, two children, and another civilian were killed in the fighting. But *contra* losses were much higher. Thirteen mercenaries died in La Trinidad itself, and more were killed as they retreated from the area. The army reported that by the following night at least 67 contras had been killed, 16 captured, and an unknown number wounded.

On August 2 a similar surprise attack on the town of Cuapa, 100 miles east of Managua, was also defeated after only three hours of fighting. About 30 contras were killed and 40 captured there.

Contras fail to achieve goals

Lt. Cmdr. Adolfo Chamorro, chief of staff for the Sandinista People's Army in the five northern provinces that have seen the most fighting, explained the significance of the La

Trinidad and Cuapa battles. "The attacks have been of little military value," he told the *Washington Post*. "They have not faced the Army or dealt it a defeat and have not been able to stay in the areas they have attacked because they have no social base there. They are once again on the run."

Defense Minister Humberto Ortega, speaking September 2 on the sixth anniversary of the founding of the Sandinista People's Army, pointed out that in the contras' overall war, they have been blocked from achieving any of their goals.

They tried, he explained, to prevent the elections last November, to disrupt the coffee harvest in December and January, and to take and hold at least one significant Nicaraguan city or town. Failing to accomplish any of these things, he said, they devote themselves to conspicuous terrorist actions.

A former leader of the contras, Edgar Chamorro, supported this view of the mercenaries' failures in an interview with *New Republic*, a weekly liberal magazine published in New York. Chamorro was a director of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), the principal *contra* group and major recipient of U.S. funds.

He cited the example of a June 1984 *contra* attack on the northern city of Ocotol, an operation very similar to the recent raids on La Trinidad and Cuapa. As in the recent cases, the contras were unable to hold Ocotol and were forced to retreat after just three hours. The local militia combined with the Sandinista People's Army to turn back the attack.

Chamorro told the *New Republic* he had favored the plan to try to capture some city. But, he said, "the CIA said it was impossible. In a way they were right. People in Nicaragua still half believed the Sandinistas were getting better. . . . Our troops took the town of Ocotol once for a few hours, but the people didn't rejoice to see us. . . . They didn't speak out for the FDN, and our soldiers didn't know how to talk to them."

Chamorro also revealed the extent to which the CIA had called all the shots in the contras' war. "We were never given the right to decide either how much we could spend on weapons or what kind of weapons we wanted," he said.

Nicaraguan officials have pointed out that they expect the contras to step up activity in central and southern regions because the Sandinistas have forced them out of many of the remote areas of northern Nicaragua where they had been operating.

The revolution is strengthening its defenses in a number of ways to meet this challenge. In August the army began a new series of call-ups for the draft. More and more workers, peas-

ants, and young people are being incorporated into the militia. In July the Defense Ministry announced it had distributed more than 200,000 guns to the people, the majority of which are now in the hands of the militias.

The August 1 and 2 battles also saw the first use by the Sandinista People's Army of its new MI-24 helicopter gunships. U.S. commentators have called the deployment of these helicopters a significant upgrading of the Sandinista Army.

Humberto Ortega pointed to other indications of progress in the war. The increasing number of *contra* soldiers who have turned themselves in to the authorities under the amnesty program is evidence of the demoralization of the counterrevolutionary army, he said.

Pastora's forces 'disintegrating'

Ortega noted that the CIA is trying to rebuild its puppet forces on Nicaragua's southern border following the "virtual disintegration" of Eden Pastora's Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE). The Sandinista weekly newspaper *Barricada Internacional* reported in August that the last of ARDE's camps on Nicaraguan soil was captured by the Sandinista People's Army, and that the ARDE troops were forced to flee across the border to Costa Rica.

Nevertheless, the Sandinista leaders have no illusions that a quick end to the war is in sight. Defense Minister Ortega explained that the U.S. government is still determined to overthrow the legitimate, revolutionary government of Nicaragua. This, he pointed out, is what is behind the recent increase of funds being publicly sent to Washington's mercenary army.

'Humanitarian' aid for murderers

After months of debate, the U.S. Congress approved an allocation of \$27 million to the Nicaraguan contras in late July. This overt aid is supposed to be used only for "humanitarian" purposes (what this could include has not been completely defined), and the CIA and the Defense Department are excluded from those agencies authorized to distribute it.

The *New York Times* called the vote "a significant victory for the administration," adding that "the Administration would look for legal loopholes to justify CIA participation."

Already, questions are being raised whether trucks or helicopters designated for medical evacuation can be included in the category of "nonlethal" or "humanitarian" aid. And the legislation specifically permits "sharing of intelligence information" between the contras and the CIA and Pentagon.

The contras' Washington spokesman, Bosco Matamoros, called the congressional vote "a clear indication of what U.S. policy is. It means there is a consensus in the United States, first over the threat that the Sandinistas represent in Central America and then in support of our struggle to democratize Nicaragua."

Following the approval of this aid, the Reagan administration set up a "Nicaraguan

Humanitarian Assistance Office," which will operate as a separate body within the State Department.

This new office takes over from a shadowy operation in the staff of the National Security Council (NSC) that had directed U.S. aid and advice to the contras since the CIA was forced by a Congressional resolution to end its direct role.

Marine Col. Oliver North, deputy director of the NSC for political-military affairs, headed this office, located in the Executive Office Building, next door to the White House.

Without naming North specifically, one senior White House official told the press that the NSC had given the contras advice and direction in advance of proposed attacks. He cited as an example a July attack on a passenger ferry that travels from Bluefields to El Rama, on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast.

Four Sandinista soldiers were killed in this attack, and several passengers were kidnapped by the contras. The boat, one of the few means of transportation in the Atlantic Coast region, was destroyed.

According to the *Washington Post*, Colonel North was also the "nerve center" for planning the 1983 invasion of Grenada and worked with a "terrorist incident working group" during the hijacking of a TWA jetliner in Lebanon in June.

Washington coordinates 'private' aid

North claims he never encouraged private donations to be sent to the Nicaraguan contras, but only told callers on the subject — who, he admitted, were numerous — to look them up in the phone book. Yet John Singlaub, a retired general and president of the World Anti-Communist League who boasts of raising money for the mercenaries, and Adolfo Calero, a leader of the FDN, both have been reported meeting with North many times.

The *Sunday Times* of London reported that nearly all private contributors to the counter-revolutionary cause make contact through North. Such private donations are estimated to total about \$25 million.

Although raised privately, these funds have been disbursed through the CIA. Three leaders of the counterrevolutionary Indian group MIS-URA said August 27 that CIA officers brokered two agreements — in February and June 1985 — concerning division of funds between their group and the FDN. The CIA refused to comment.

Assistance to foreign military operations by private citizens is illegal under the U.S. Neutrality Act. CIA support for the Nicaraguan contras was supposedly outlawed by a Congressional resolution late last year.

While beefing up its mercenary bands in the field, Washington is also pursuing other approaches to opposing the Nicaraguan revolution.

After claiming Nicaraguan aircraft had violated Costa Rican airspace July 26, Costa Rican President Luis Alberto Monge accused the Sandinista government of "bringing its

civil war to Costa Rican territory." The Costa Rican Security Council was reported to have discussed the possibility of breaking relations with Managua.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega proposed the creation of a demilitarized zone under international supervision along the two countries' common border. The plan has been rejected out of hand by the Monge government.

In another provocation, the U.S. embassy in Managua presented an official note to Nicaraguan officials on July 17. It accused Nicaragua of aiding in the assassination of six U.S. citizens in El Salvador in June. The note threatened: "A repetition in any part of Central America of the June 19 assassination of U.S. citizens in El Salvador would bring serious consequences for the perpetrators and those who assist them."

The Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry replied, reasserting Nicaragua's "emphatic and complete condemnation of all forms of terrorism, particularly state terrorism such as that promoted and financed by the U.S. administration against our country."

The Nicaraguan reply described as "absurd" the U.S. plan to hold Nicaragua responsible for possible future U.S. casualties in Honduras. It compared this to the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, which Washington fabricated in order to justify a massive escalation of its intervention against Vietnam.

The Foreign Ministry explained that the U.S. threats "can only be understood in the context of the U.S. government's determination to fabricate a necessary pretext . . . to generate the conditions for a direct military aggression against the Nicaraguan people." □

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Intercontinental Press specializes in political analysis and interpretation of events of particular interest to the labor, socialist, colonial independence, Black, and women's liberation movements.

Signed articles represent the views of the authors, which may not necessarily coincide with those of Intercontinental Press. Insofar as it reflects editorial opinion, unsigned material stands on the program of the Fourth International.

Editor: Doug Jenness.

Contributing Editors: Livio Maitan, Ernest Mandel, George Novack.

Managing Editor: Ernest Harsch.

Editorial Staff: Steve Craine, Will Reissner.

Business Manager: Patti Iiyama.

INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS (ISSN 0162-5594) is published biweekly except for one issue in January and one issue in August for \$30 per year by Intercontinental Press, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Intercontinental Press is indexed by the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7229, Baltimore, MD 21218; tel.: (301) 243-2471.

To Subscribe:

U.S. and Canada: Send US\$30.00, drawn on a U.S. bank, for a one-year subscription. Correspondence should be addressed to: Intercontinental Press, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. Telephone (212) 929-6933.

Britain, Ireland, continental Europe: Write to Pathfinder Press, 47 The Cut, London SE1 8LL.

Australia: Write to Pathfinder Press, P.O. Box 37, Leichhardt, N.S.W. 2040.

New Zealand: Write to Socialist Books, P.O. Box 8730, Auckland.

Write to New York for subscription rates to all other countries.

Please allow five weeks for change of address. Include your old address, and, if possible, an address label from a recent issue.

Intercontinental Press is published by the 408 Printing and Publishing Corporation, 408 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. Offices at 408 West Street, New York, N.Y.

New stage in the revolutionary struggle

Racist apartheid system shaken to its roots

By Ernest Harsch

South Africa is today in the grip of the greatest popular upheaval in its long and turbulent history.

For more than a year, the oppressed Black masses, millions of them, have been mobilizing to strike at the hated system of apartheid. Workers, students, women, unemployed youth, shopkeepers, religious figures, teachers, those in the countryside — all are waging a determined struggle against the wretched poverty of apartheid, the humiliation and injustice of white minority rule.

What they are fighting for is freedom. They are fighting for the abolition of the whip, for the basic right to live like human beings, not chattels of a white *baas* (master). They are fighting for the land that was taken away from them.

And they are fighting for power. As Frank Chikane, a leader of the mass-based United Democratic Front (UDF) put it, "The real issue is that the people are no longer willing to be governed by anyone but themselves." In place of the existing racist regime that speaks only for the tiny white ruling class of industrialists, bankers, and landlords, the masses of South Africa are struggling for a government based on the Black majority.

Scenes of struggle

Over the past year, there have been hundreds of scenes of popular defiance and resistance. A few have reached television screens and newspaper pages around the world. Most have not. Only a few are needed to convey the force of this social explosion:

- In defiance of the state of emergency, thousands of Blacks and some whites march through the southern suburbs of Cape Town, holding high portraits of Nelson Mandela, the long-imprisoned leader of the African National Congress (ANC), the outlawed liberation movement. Well before they can even approach Pollsmoor prison where Mandela is held, they are met with police whips, tear gas, and bullets.

- More than 100,000 Blacks pack the soccer stadium in KwaNobuhle, near Uitenhage, to bury 29 slain protesters. The coffins are laid out in front of the grandstand, draped in the black, green, and gold colors of the ANC. A sea of fists is raised and a chorus of voices shouts, "Viva Mandela!" The names of other ANC leaders follow, as well as that of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the ANC's armed wing.

- In Sharpeville, the site of the notorious 1960 massacre, thousands of residents again gather to bury their dead. When police enter

the cemetery, the mourners turn and march straight at them, shouting, "Kill us as well! Kill us!" The police withdraw.

- In nearby Sebokeng, the Lekoa Town Council, a group of Black collaborators that administers several local townships on behalf of the regime, has moved to a new location after some of its members have been killed by angry residents. The councillors now live in an armed compound, surrounded by an electrified fence and barbed wire, their homes out of reach of gasoline bombs. They are the "government in exile," as residents call them. Though a councillor claims "the situation is 99 percent normal now," some 350,000 inhabitants continue to refuse to pay rent.

- One morning in March, the auto assembly lines in Port Elizabeth fall silent. No workers show up. The city is shut down for a three-day "stayaway" strike.

- Thousands of Black unionists fill the Rocklands Civic Center in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town, to celebrate May Day. Speeches are punctuated with shouts of "Amandla!" (power). Workers dance in the aisles. A member of the Cape Town Municipal Workers Association gets up and says he is proud to be there because he is a worker. "Not that it's nice to be a worker," he continues. "It's hard. But I'm proud because workers in South Africa have decided to get up and fight. Thousands of workers have decided to finish with waiting. History has taught us that nobody can better the workers' lot, only workers can do this."

'The wheels have begun to fall off'

Since the beginning of this upsurge, the authorities have responded with massive repression. At least 670 Blacks have been killed, the vast bulk of them young demonstrators shot down by the police.

The regime has arrested thousands. It is placing top leaders of the UDF on trial for "treason." In late July, it imposed a state of emergency on 36 districts around Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. Troops have been mobilized to aid the regular police.

And on a greater scale than before, the authorities have resorted to "extralegal" forms of repression, beyond what even their own draconian laws empower them to do. Some death squads have been formed, and local UDF leaders in Duduza, Cradock, Umlazi, and Graaff-Reinet have been assassinated on the street or kidnapped and later killed.

While this repression has taken a heavy toll, it has not succeeded in stifling resistance. In fact, the protests spread even further after the imposition of the state of emergency, to areas that had previously been relatively quiet.

Fear as an instrument of rule is clearly losing its effectiveness.

That is why the apartheid rulers are also talking about "reform." President Pieter Botha has introduced a few modifications. He has made vague promises of greater changes in the future.

Botha's reform moves have been met by Blacks with either indifference or even more vigorous opposition.

These failures to reestablish firm control have deepened the crisis of apartheid rule and shaken the confidence of the South African capitalist class. In a speech in November 1984, Tony Bloom, the chairman of the Premier Group, summarized the views of many of his fellow businessmen when he said that "there seems to be a feeling that the wheels have begun to fall off."

Sharp rifts have emerged within ruling-class circles over how to deal with the mobilizations. Some argue that more "reforms" are needed to dampen the discontent. Others are opposed to any reforms, on the grounds that they will only encourage Blacks to fight for more.

Meanwhile, the declining confidence of foreign investors has led to a limited flight of capital, a reluctance by foreign banks to make new loans, and a further drop in the value of the rand. This comes on top of an already severe economic crisis.

Commenting on this new situation, the ANC stressed in a call to the people of South Africa issued in April, "On the side of the people the conditions for a revolutionary leap forward are beginning to mature. On the side of the ruling class the economic and political crisis has reached new heights. . . . The historic conditions which are necessary to ensure the collapse of the apartheid system and the creation by the people of a new social order are beginning to take shape in a greater measure than ever before in our history."

Goals of apartheid

This upheaval is the product of some eight years of mass struggle opened up by the 1976 youth rebellions.

But in a more fundamental sense, its roots lie in the very contradictions of the white supremacist system itself.

Under that system, the regime, resting on a white minority of nearly 5 million, maintains its total political domination over the Black majority: 24 million Africans, 3 million Coloureds (of mixed ancestry), and nearly 1 million Indians.

It is based on the white settlers' expropriation of the vast bulk of the Africans' land,

some 87 percent. The remainder — the poorest and most barren areas — are today's 10 African rural reserves; called Bantustans.

Deprived of any other means of livelihood, Blacks have been proletarianized on a massive scale. Their superexploitation has made possible the development of South African capitalism and the country's extensive industrialization.

To keep them under control, the regime denies Blacks virtually all political rights: they cannot vote for any national bodies, live where they want, or freely speak their minds. They are not treated as full citizens, but as foreigners in the country of their birth. They suffer under a form of colonial servitude.

The long-standing problem facing the authorities is how to maintain this system of rule in face of the numbers and social power of the Black population.

The very adoption of the policy of apartheid with the 1948 electoral victory of the National Party marked an attempt to tackle this problem. Besides the methodical extension of all aspects of the prevailing system of racist rule, apartheid meant:

- deepening and perfecting the policy of divide and rule,
- denying urban Africans any permanent residency rights in the "white" cities, and
- developing a layer of reliable Black collaborators to help administer apartheid laws.

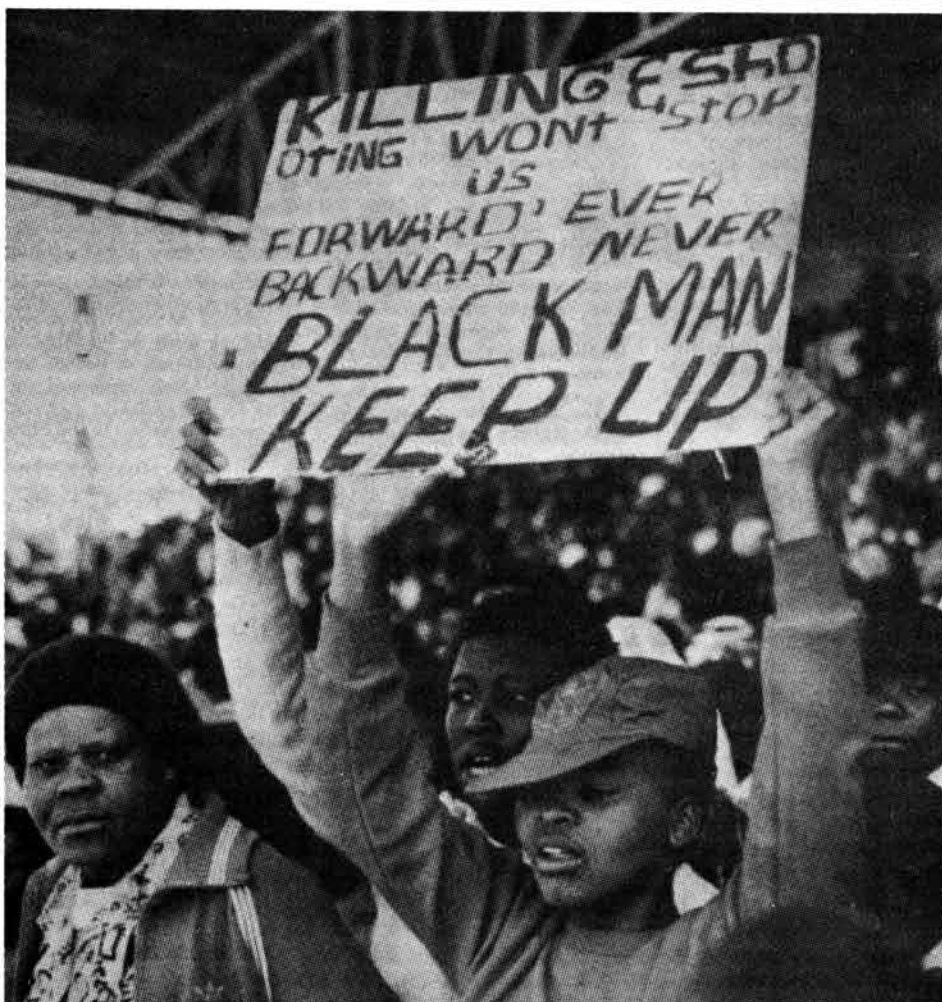
Through racial classification, residential segregation, the prohibition of mixed marriages, and other measures, the authorities sought to pit Coloureds and Indians against the African majority. Through elevating the Bantustans into "national homelands" based on particular language groupings, the regime tried to further divide Africans among themselves.

These policies were aimed at preventing the emergence of a unified Black nation.

Closely linked to the Bantustan policy, any residency rights that Africans had in urban centers were systematically eliminated. Urban Africans were classified as "citizens" of one or another Bantustan, subject to expulsion from the "white" cities. They could only remain there on the government's sufferance, as long as they were employed. Certain industries (like the gold mines) employed only migrant laborers.

Millions of Africans were kicked out of the townships and the "white" countryside. The number of Africans forced to live in the impoverished Bantustans rose from 5 million to 11 million between 1960 and 1980. Some 1.8 million more rural Africans are still threatened with forced resettlement; they include "squatters" on white-owned farms, farm laborers made jobless by the increased mechanization of agriculture, and small pockets of African peasants who have not yet been forced off their land.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the regime outlawed the ANC and other political organizations that were genuinely based on the Black majority. Parallel to this, it drove ahead to try to create a layer of subservient Black collaborators to take their place. In the Bantus-



FOSATU Worker News

Members of National Union of Textile Workers at funeral for slain protesters in KwaThema.

tans, this involved promoting the progovernment tribal chiefs as the "natural" leaders of the African peoples, reinforced by a stratum of privileged officials. In the urban townships, councils of local African businessmen and other notables were set up with the same aim. National and local Coloured and Indian councils were also established.

Controls weaken

The apartheid authorities hoped that these mechanisms of control would keep Blacks in check for some time to come. But they were still confronted by the same problem: the further development of South Africa as an industrialized, capitalist society was creating the very social forces with the power to weaken and break these shackles.

The size of the Black working class grew yet further, to some 8 million Black workers today. The proportion of Black to white workers increased in virtually every industry. The expansion of large-scale manufacturing also created the need for a more stable urban working class, undermining the migrant labor system to an extent.

It proved impossible to keep "superfluous Africans," as the regime termed them, out of

the major cities, despite the rigid enforcement of the pass laws that control African movement, residency, and employment. Thousands are living illegally in every Black township. Huge unauthorized shantytowns have sprung up, such as Crossroads outside Cape Town.

The Bantustan officials and other Black collaborators failed to win any real authority among Blacks. They were spurned. Only a handful, such as Zulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, were able to create a certain base of support, and then only by adopting an "anti-apartheid" pose. The Bantustans themselves were widely resisted.

The authorities were no more successful in preventing the different sectors of the oppressed population from establishing closer ties. Among Africans, the earlier identification with language and tribe broke down further with the expansion of urban life and the rise in political understanding. Coloureds and Indians, particularly among working people and the youth, viewed themselves increasingly as part of the broader Black majority.

And finally, the regime was unable to wall South Africa off from big political developments in the rest of Africa. The collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the winning of in-

dependence by Angola and Mozambique greatly inspired South Africa's Black masses. The defeat of the 1975-76 South African invasion of Angola at the hands of Angolan and Cuban troops proved that the apartheid regime could be beaten.

1976, a turning point

These developments within South Africa and abroad spurred renewed social and political opposition to the apartheid system.

Dozens of new Black student and community groups arose in the early 1970s, many of them putting forward a militantly nationalist perspective known as Black Consciousness. They rejected the Bantustans and argued strongly for the unity of all Africans, Coloureds, and Indians.

In 1973, Black workers in Durban unleashed a massive strike wave.

Most significantly, Black students openly rebelled against the regime's racist system of education, which has left 33 percent of all Blacks over the age of 15 illiterate and which seeks to teach acceptance of their inferior status. Their demonstrations, beginning in June 1976, set off a massive political explosion, as Black youths and working people in some 160 townships took to the streets to protest the injustices of apartheid.

These rebellions lacked any overall political organization or direction, however. The Black Consciousness groups had only limited political authority and put forward no concrete programs of struggle. The workers, though they participated in a few general strikes called by the students, did not yet have their own organizations. The ANC was still trying to recover from the blows it suffered in the 1960s, and many of its active members were living in exile.

Nevertheless, the scope of the township uprisings reflected the depth of popular anger and a new willingness by masses of Blacks to once again engage in open struggle. These revolts marked a turning point.

Repression and 'reform'

Shaken by 1976, which took the apartheid regime by surprise, the authorities adopted a dual response.

Most immediately, they fell back on their favorite method of rule — armed force. The rebellions were physically crushed, at a cost of more than 600 Black lives. The main political organizations were outlawed, although new ones quickly sprang up.

Sectors of the ruling class also recognized that repression was not enough — that some adjustments were needed in the way apartheid functioned.

After a factional struggle within the National Party, the *verligte* ("enlightened") wing of the party won the leadership with the emergence of Botha as head of state in 1978. This wing also had the support of the military hierarchy around Gen. Magnus Malan. Those who opposed any changes in apartheid split away to form the Conservative Party and other ultra-rightist groups.

Botha and Malan drove ahead on several fronts. One involved new efforts to shore up the Bantustans and other collaborationist bodies. Four of the Bantustans were declared "independent" states (Transkei, Ciskei, BophuthaTswana, and Venda, with Kwa-Ndebele next in line.)

In the urban townships, expulsions to the Bantustans were actually stepped up, and the pass laws were enforced even more rigidly. There were 263,000 pass law arrests in 1983, compared with 160,000 in 1981. At the same time, concessions were made to a tiny layer of better-off urban Africans; those who could afford to buy their own homes were given leasehold rights and African businessmen gained new opportunities for trade. Based on this layer, the Black urban councils were refurbished and given new administrative powers.

In a clear effort to break the developing unity among Africans, Coloureds, and Indians, the bodies that were supposed to represent the latter two communities were upgraded even more, into subservient, mini-parliaments. A Coloured and an Indian have been named to the cabinet (though it is the white officials who still set the tune).

On the labor front, major concessions were made. For the first time, the right of African workers to organize themselves into unions was recognized in 1979, although with many restrictive conditions. As with the other "reforms," the regime's motivation was simply to reassert its control: By conceding Black union recognition, it hoped to impose a wide range of legal shackles on those Black unions that were already beginning to emerge.

And like the previous apartheid administrations, Botha and Malan relied on repression. In fact, the regime stepped up the efforts to destabilize neighboring Black-ruled governments that aid the ANC and the South West Africa People's Organisation fighting for the independence of South African-ruled Namibia. It repeatedly attacked refugee facilities abroad and assassinated key ANC leaders.

But the new *verligte* leadership of the National Party was no more able to tie down the Black giant than were the earlier administrations. It was stymied by the same social developments: the growing power of the Black workers' movement and the rising political awareness and organization of the Black population as a whole.

Economic crisis

By the early 1980s, another element entered the picture — the deepening economic crisis in the country. The brunt of this fell on the Black population, which was already barely able to survive, greatly sharpening its discontent.

Under the impact of the world capitalist economic crisis, South Africa entered its deepest recession since the 1930s. The world market prices of many of its key exports (diamonds, manganese, and sugar) dropped. The price of gold not only fluctuated, but also tended to fall.

In 1982, for the first time in many years, South Africa's gross domestic product actually

declined. Auto, construction, and various manufacturing industries were especially hard hit. Hundreds of companies went under. Unemployment officially rose to some 3 million Blacks, or about 30 percent of the work force.

Inflation, which has climbed to some 16 percent this year, has eaten further into Black living standards. By 1985, food and other prices had doubled over those of 1980 (and were more than three times 1975 prices).

The impoverishment of the Bantustans has accelerated. In 1982, government figures revealed that between 70 and 77 percent of the rural households did not earn enough for "survival in the short-term."

The very limited cultivation of food in the Bantustans was devastated by the serious drought of the early 1980s. According to relief workers, some 2.9 million Africans under the age of 15 now suffer from malnutrition. Each year, between 35,000 and 50,000 children die of illnesses related to or aggravated by dietary deficiencies.

Since many urban Africans have relatives in the Bantustans, or themselves commute back and forth, they too felt the impact of this rural misery.

Workers build unions

Around 1980, even before the recession began to bite severely, Black workers started to go on strike in increasing numbers. They ignored all the laws prohibiting strikes by Black workers and downed their tools in industry after industry with the aim of winning higher wages, increased benefits, and recognition for their unions.

In 1982, there was an average of more than one new strike each day. In 1984 more workdays were lost through strike action than any other year in South Africa's history.

Some strikes were broken. But many won significant wage gains for Black workers. Increasingly, strikers secured broad community backing for their actions, expressed through financial contributions, political support, and solidarity boycotts.

Above all, in contrast to the spontaneous and unorganized strikes of previous years, most of these actions were *led*.

The independent Black and nonracial union movement has mushroomed since the late 1970s. Taking advantage of the regime's limited recognition of union activity, Black workers then pushed aside many of the remaining restrictions and asserted their right to set up their own unions. The government was unable to stop them.

Today there are well over half a million Black workers organized into unions. This is still a small percentage of the total Black labor force, but it is growing rapidly. A few years ago the National Union of Mineworkers did not exist; today it is the strongest union in the country, claiming nearly half of all Black miners.

The workers' movement is still beset by many problems. There is no unified national labor federation. The unions are divided over organizational differences, tactical considera-



FOSATU Worker News

Striking members of Metal and Allied Workers Union demonstrating in Pietermaritzburg's Imbali township.

tions, and how much and in what way to link the struggle of workers in the factories to the broader fight for national liberation.

Yet despite these growth pains, the very emergence of a strong Black labor movement has significantly altered the relationship of forces between the rulers and the oppressed Black majority.

Role of ANC

That has also been changed by the rise of new political organizations and the rapidly growing influence and leadership role of the ANC.

In the wake of the 1976 rebellions, the ANC was able to expand its recruitment considerably, both within South Africa and among the thousands of youths who fled abroad to escape the regime's bloodbath. The ANC was in this way able to reknit and strengthen its links with the mass movements, links that had been weakened by the repression of the 1960s.

In this, the ANC benefitted from the decline of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Originating as a split from the ANC in the late 1950s, it too had been banned in 1960 and subsequently attempted to launch armed actions and operate underground, but with much less success. Although today it still maintains a diplomatic presence abroad and has a residue of support in South Africa, it has essentially ceased to function within the country.

The ANC was also able to fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of the original Black Consciousness movement, many of whose leaders and activists have now joined or support the ANC. Only a few groups that claim the Black Consciousness mantle still exist, most notably the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo).

Rejuvenated by the influx of new recruits,

the ANC responded to the new situation in South Africa by escalating its armed actions, promoting its political perspective among the masses, and encouraging the spread of popular struggles.

Since the late 1970s, the ANC's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, has sharply stepped up its operations. According to the government's tally (which is on the conservative side), Umkhonto has carried out some 275 armed attacks. These have largely involved sabotage of key economic and strategic targets, causing damages of more than US\$500 million. There have also been attacks on police stations and military bases, as well as armed clashes with troops and police.

Less dramatic, but no less important, has been the ANC's clandestine political work. It has underground activists and supporters helping to build and lead trade unions, community organizations, and other formations that are functioning openly within South Africa.

Campaign for Freedom Charter

To give greater political direction to the mass struggles that were unfolding around the country and to popularize its own views, the ANC and its supporters launched a major campaign in 1980 to get the Freedom Charter into the hands of as many political activists as possible.

The Freedom Charter was first drawn up in 1955, by some 3,000 delegates from the ANC and many different organizations assembled at the Congress of the People, held in Kliptown, near Johannesburg.

The Freedom Charter is a revolutionary democratic program. It calls for a redistribution of the land among those who work it; the right of workers to freely organize; the abolition of all racist and discriminatory legislation; the extension of full democratic rights to all sectors of

the population; the nationalization of all mineral wealth, banks, and monopoly industry; and the expansion of education, housing, health care, and other social programs for everyone, on an equal basis.

The Freedom Charter also demands the establishment of a "democratic state, based on the will of all the people."

As the Freedom Charter once again became widely known within South Africa, more and more groups adopted it as their program. Some of the original adherents of the ANC's Congress Alliance of the 1950s, which had fallen dormant over the years, were revived, including the Transvaal Indian Congress and the Federation of South African Women.

In 1981, delegates from 109 organizations gathered in Durban for a "nonracial democrats" assembly. Coming from trade unions, Black and white students' groups, women's associations, sporting bodies, and local community organizations, they represented a combined membership of 300,000. The conference reaffirmed the demands of the Freedom Charter. "It is a universal document containing our minimum demands," the conference declared. "It provides us with the guidelines of a framework within which all struggles today are conducted."

As the Freedom Charter became increasingly accepted and as the mass struggles began to heat up once again over the course of the early 1980s, the ANC emerged as the single most popular political organization in the country.

This was borne out by repeated expressions of public support for the ANC at political meetings and rallies, the groundswell of demands for the release of Nelson Mandela and other imprisoned ANC leaders, and a series of Black opinion polls conducted by South African and foreign newspapers. Most recently, a

London *Sunday Times* poll of urban Africans found that 49 percent said Mandela would make the best president for the country and 90 percent said he should be released unconditionally.

The ANC has won its place as the leading force fighting for South Africa's national democratic revolution. It is now widely recognized, both within the country and abroad, as the legitimate representative of the oppressed Black majority and of all those in South Africa favoring an end to apartheid.

United Democratic Front

As Botha pushed ahead with the apartheid regime's "reform" program, Black resistance mounted. The immediate issue that set the stage for the beginning of the current upheaval was the plan to establish the new tricameral parliament, with Coloureds and Indians allowed to vote for segregated and largely powerless Coloured and Indian chambers.

The announcement in early 1983 that elections would be held for these bodies sparked immediate opposition within the Coloured and Indian communities, as well as among Africans. They recognized it as a provocation and a further effort to divide Blacks.

In Cape Town, Durban, and other centers, Coloured and Indian candidates were met with big counterdemonstrations.

In the Transvaal, Cape, and Natal provinces, coalitions of Black political groups and some unions were launched to fight Botha's measures.

In August 1983, these regional coalitions, plus many other groups, held a national convention, attended by 12,000 people, in Cape Town. The United Democratic Front was born.

Rev. Allan Boesak, a key initiator of the UDF, explained, "For those of us who are Black and who suffer under this system, there is no positive side" to the new parliamentary setup.

At its founding, the UDF already consisted of 400 affiliated groups, with a combined membership of 1 million. It soon grew to some 600 organizations and nearly 2 million members.

These include student groups, women's organizations, community associations, trade unions, religious bodies, sporting groups, and political organizations. Its members and leaders are overwhelming Black — Africans, Coloureds, and Indians — but there are also anti-apartheid whites, who play key roles.

Among the 18 predominantly Black unions that have joined the UDF are key ones like the South African Allied Workers Union, the General and Allied Workers Union, and the Council of Unions of South Africa. There are, however, other important unions that have not affiliated to the UDF, such as the Federation of South African Trade Unions, although they have at times supported the same political campaigns.

Most of the groups that took part in the 1981 Durban conference that endorsed the Freedom



Nelson Mandela's daughter, Zinzi, at protest demanding release of imprisoned ANC leader.

Charter are part of the UDF. Some of its leaders are widely identified as supporters of the ANC.

Although individual groups and leaders support the Freedom Charter and look to the ANC, the UDF itself is a much broader coalition, the sole basis for membership being opposition to the regime's measures. In an effort to justify its repression against the UDF, the apartheid regime often accuses it of being little more than a front for the ANC. UDF leaders vigorously deny that.

Election boycott

The UDF's first major initiative brought a resounding victory: the August 1984 boycott of the elections to the Coloured and Indian chambers of parliament. This boycott marked the beginning of the massive upheaval that is still rocking the country today.

The UDF organized an active campaign, with the accent on mass meetings, conferences, and rallies. Tens of thousands throughout the country, but particularly in Cape Town and Durban, turned out to condemn the whole election fraud. Indians were drawn into mass action on a scale unseen since the 1950s. Most of the major Black and nonracial unions called on their members not to vote.

The ANC, in a broadcast over its Radio Freedom (based in nearby Black-ruled states), declared, "Do not vote. . . . If you vote you will be voting for the perpetuation of the apartheid system. If you vote you will be voting for continued domination of the Black people by the white minority."

When the final vote tallies came in, a mere 18 percent of all registered Coloured voters had turned out, and 15.5 percent of Indian voters.

The regime went ahead and installed the new tricameral parliament anyway. But the success of the boycott had stripped it of any legitimacy before the eyes of the world.

The boycott campaign provided an inspiration to Blacks throughout the country, encouraging them to press forward with their own particular grievances and demands. By focusing on the most fundamental issue in South Africa — who should govern — the UDF boycott also set the political framework in which the subsequent struggles tended to unfold.

The UDF itself broadened its aims to include opposition to other aspects of the apartheid system. And some of its individual affiliates took a lead in the mass protests.

In early September, just a few weeks after the boycott, the first community rebellions began, leading to major police killings of demonstrators. Within weeks the mobilizations spread to Black townships around the country.

These actions had actually been provoked by the regime's efforts to impose its Black community councils. To keep functioning and to maintain the local services they were assigned to administer, the councils had to raise their own funds. They decided to do so by hiking rents, bus fares, electricity rates, and other levies on Blacks themselves. Already driven to the wall by the rising unemployment and high prices of food, township residents fought back.

Blacks stopped paying rents and electricity fees on a massive scale. Bus boycotts were launched. Particularly hated members of the local councils had their homes burned down, and a few were killed in clashes with demonstrators. The demand that all councillors resign spread rapidly and was further popularized by the ANC's Radio Freedom. Hundreds of councillors did resign.

Other sectors of the population went into action as well.

Several million primary, high school, and university students have participated in school boycotts at one time or another over the past year to protest the racist education system and the police killings of demonstrators. The Congress of South African Students, a Black high school group that is a key UDF affiliate, played the central role in these student actions. It has now been outlawed.

Labor flexes its muscles

Workers have continued to launch major strike actions. These have mainly been around immediate economic demands, but many workers and unions have also been drawn into the broader political campaigns.

In early November 1984, much of the heavily industrialized southern Transvaal region around Johannesburg and Pretoria was paralyzed by a two-day general strike called by an ad hoc coalition of 37 political groups and trade unions, some of them affiliates of the UDF. Perhaps as many as a million Black workers stayed away from their jobs around political demands, including an end to police repression, release of all political prisoners, and the resignation of Black councillors.

This was the largest political strike in South African history, and registered the growing power of the Black working class. The groups that sponsored the strike considered it a tre-

mendous success.

During late 1984 and 1985, regional general strikes, also around political issues, shut down Sharpeville, Grahamstown, Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth, KwaThema, and Pietermaritzburg. In some individual plants, workers have also struck around political demands, for example opposition to the state of emergency. At the Mercedes-Benz auto plant in East London, some 3,000 workers went on strike August 28 to protest against the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela.

Unrest has begun to spread to the countryside as well. The UDF has some rural affiliates, and a few actions have been carried out in its name in rural areas. Rebellions have broken out in some of the Bantustans.

In numerous locations, rural African communities are resisting the regime's efforts to forcibly move them off their land. These struggles are becoming more coordinated, and in February this year representatives from 95 such communities met in a national conference in Wilgespruit. "We will fight for our future," they declared.

Some whites, too, have been drawn more into the anti-apartheid struggle. The National Union of South African Students (the main white university students' group) and the Black Sash (a white women's organization) belong to the UDF. More than 30 groups have now emerged to fight against military conscription, which affects all white males over the age of 18.

The UDF has remained at the center of these mobilizations and has sought to give them greater national direction. Toward this end, an annual conference of the UDF General Council in April 1985 issued a platform of far-reaching

political demands (see box).

On the basis of such demands, declared publicity secretary Mosioua Lekota, "The UDF will go into the streets time and time again."

Through its propaganda and the actions of its own members, the ANC has supported and encouraged this perspective. Its slogan, "Make apartheid unworkable, make the country ungovernable," has caught on among activists across the country.

'We have advanced a great deal'

By declaring the state of emergency and cracking down hard on the UDF, the apartheid regime as sought to regain some control.

In face of this repression, the sentiment for resisting the apartheid regime with arms in hand is spreading. This has been shown by the willingness of youths to take on the police with just rocks and gasoline bombs, and the frequent chants supporting Umkhonto we Sizwe. It has also been reflected in some recent polls. At the University of the Transkei, half of the students favored the use of guns and explosives as methods of protest. A major study by the regime's own Human Sciences Research Council found that 63 percent of all Africans polled "reacted positively to using violence to bring about political change," while the figures stood at 40 percent for Indians and 37 percent for Coloureds.

But the apartheid regime remains a formidable opponent. It has a very powerful military and police apparatus. It has Black collaborators, like Buthelezi, who are playing a greater repressive role. Faced with continued opposition, it can exact an even heavier toll in Black lives.

In line with its past practice, the Botha re-

gime is also preparing yet more "reforms," new concessions, in the hopes of defusing the unrest.

So far, however, there are no signs that Botha's latest combination of the stick and the carrot is having any lasting success. The mobilizations are continuing to unfold.

One reason is that the mass leadership today is very broad, and it reaches down to the community level. Imprisoning the top UDF leaders has not been sufficient to behead the mass movement, and new leaders continue to step forward to take their place.

The worldwide outcry against the apartheid regime and the growing movement for sanctions against it have also been important factors in strengthening the Black majority's political resolve.

However long the current upheaval lasts or whatever new forms it may take, it has already irrevocably changed the face of South African politics. It has opened a new stage in the revolutionary struggle.

Mass political consciousness has been raised enormously, not just in a few centers, but in literally hundreds of factories and Black townships around the country.

Sectors of the apartheid regime's local administration have been crippled with the collapse of dozens of its township councils. The role of Buthelezi and other Bantustan figures has been further exposed. It has become much more difficult for Black collaborators to function, thereby further limiting the regime's options.

The solidarity among all three sectors of the Black population — Africans, Coloureds, and Indians — has been reinforced more than ever before.

A still small, but politically significant, layer of whites has been impelled to speak out against the barbaric practices of the regime that claims to rule in their name. A few have chosen to openly side with the Black freedom struggle.

Through their strike actions, the growth of their unions, and their participation in the local community rebellions, the Black working class has gained a greater sense of its potential power and greater confidence in its ability to lead forward the overall fight for national liberation.

And even more than before, the ANC has been thrust forward as the spearhead of the entire revolutionary democratic struggle, a struggle aiming toward the overthrow of white minority rule and the establishment of a free South Africa.

"The apartheid system is in crisis," ANC President Oliver Tambo declared in a speech broadcast over Radio Freedom July 22.

"The state of emergency will not extricate the racists from this situation. All it will do is further to deepen that crisis and increase the cost in human lives of ending white minority domination in our country. We have advanced a great deal towards the realisation of our goal of a united, democratic, and non-racial South Africa. There can be no stopping now. There can be no turning back." □

UDF platform of demands

[Some 400 delegates attended a three-day annual conference of the General Council of the United Democratic Front in Azaadville, near Ranfontein, in early April 1985. The theme of the conference was, "From Protest to Challenge, From Mobilisation to Organisation." The UDF General Council issued the following platform of demands, as reprinted in the April 9 issue of the *Sowetan*, a Black-run newspaper.]

* * *

- The immediate scrapping of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts and all Group Areas laws, and an end to any form of forced removals.
- The dissolution of the bantustans and the ending of the migratory labour system.
- The scrapping of the tricameral parliament and all other puppet bodies created under the Black Local Authorities Act and other instruments of racist rule.
- A unified and democratic education system.
- The repeal of the pass laws and all

other restrictions on freedom of movement.

- The right of workers to freely organise in trade unions, to collectively bargain and the right to strike without being penalised, the right to security of employment, housing, social welfare, pensions and maternity benefits, as laid down in the UN Human Rights Covenants and the Charters of the International Labour Organisation.

- The release of all political prisoners, the unbanning of the banned individuals and organisations, the return of exiles and the lifting of all restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly.

- The disbanding of the SADF, Koevoet, the SAP,* and all other repressive apparatuses.

- The scrapping of all barbaric security laws which violate the fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

* SADF: South African Defence Force, the military; Koevoet: a special counterinsurgency force in Namibia; SAP: South African Police. — IP

Sydney rally protests apartheid

ANC leader calls on activists to push for more sanctions

By Ron Poulsen

SYDNEY — "Apartheid cannot be reformed, it must be destroyed!" Mfanafuthi Makatini, representing the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress (ANC), told an enthusiastic rally here on August 24. Some 2,000 people marched through city streets to the rally organized by the Australian Anti-apartheid Movement.

It was the biggest protest against apartheid in this country since the demonstrations by tens of thousands against the rugby football tour by the South African Springboks in 1971.

Makatini pointed out that South African President Pieter Botha's recent speech had dashed international expectations of any significant changes in the apartheid system. It showed the regime's true face as it arrogantly justified its use of terror against the South African people to defend this bastion of minority white rule and privilege. However, Makatini said, "We were not surprised, as we know the mentality of the South African regime as a prisoner knows his jailer."

Explaining that the struggle was for "a non-racial, democratic South Africa," Makatini appealed for support "for the ANC and the entire oppressed and struggling people of South Africa . . . from the labor, peace, youth, and women's movements in Australia."

"The ANC is the oldest liberation movement on the African continent. It is not just the vanguard," Makatini emphasized, "but the sole and authentic representative of the oppressed South African people," just as the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) alone plays that role in Namibia. "Together we wage a common struggle against the regime in Pretoria. We will remain in the trenches until our two countries are liberated. Together we will win."

Another speaker was Helen Boyle, a prominent Black activist from Tranby Co-operative College for Aborigines, who pledged "the solidarity of Black Australians to the fighting Black people of South Africa." Both peoples, she said, are "victims of a cruel system of racism by governments introduced by colonialism. In fact, open apartheid still exists in Australia with the racist reserve system, especially in Queensland."

Calling for the severing of all ties to South Africa by the Australian government, Boyle noted that the experience of the land rights movement here was that "we won't get much unless we force them." "Our Black brothers and sisters are in the forefront of the liberation struggle along with the people of Nicaragua," she stated. "They will win, and someday we will too."

Retiring Australian Council of Trade Unions

(ACTU) President Cliff Dolan also addressed the rally.

He noted that "while the trade union movement has only responded to particular events, it abhors this horrible crime of apartheid in South Africa."

Dolan warned that "a hit list" of Australian corporations operating in South Africa, and of South African companies in Australia, has been drawn up by the trade union movement.

The Transport Workers Union had decided to take action to stop South African Airways flying into and out of Australia, he said. Some South African ships and cargo have already been delayed in Australian ports by the actions of dock workers.

The coming ACTU Congress in September, Dolan concluded, would be a forum for the trade union movement to express its support for "our Black worker colleagues in South Africa."

Another speaker, Senator Bruce Childs, a left Australian Labor Party (ALP) member of parliament, pointed out that since the election of the Labor government in 1983, an ANC Information Centre had been able to open in Sydney and a similar office for SWAPO in Melbourne "to directly answer the propaganda of the Botha regime."

He explained his view that "the whole cabinet is opposed to apartheid. The only differences are over the strength of sanctions to apply." He predicted that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher would be isolated on the issue at the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in the Bahamas in October.

Foreign Minister Bill Hayden recently moved to close the Australian Trade Commis-

sion in Johannesburg, yet the South African counterpart here remains undisturbed. The Australian government has adopted the posture of calling for "multilateral" sanctions against South Africa by the United Nations rather than implement sterner sanctions itself.

But full diplomatic links exist between Canberra and Pretoria, and trade between the two countries has tripled in the past decade, including during the current government. In fact, many of Australia's most powerful corporations, such as Broken Hill Properties (Australia's giant steel monopoly) and Colonial Sugar Refineries, have a direct — and highly profitable — stake in maintaining the brutal superexploitation of Black labor in South Africa.

Although government investment in either direction between the two countries has been prohibited under Hayden's policy, this has no effect on private investment, and Australian companies exporting to South Africa still get government financial incentives.

Makatini, in welcoming what he termed "Australia's positive if modest action against apartheid," pointed to the role of pressure from the labor movement and the impact of the mass anti-apartheid movement of the early 1970s. He called for this "first such step by a western ally of Pretoria" to be "broadened and strengthened."

"Push them," he said, "to stop South African Airways, to stop new investment in South Africa, to end all sporting contacts, and to close the embassy."

Eddie Funde, the ANC Information Centre representative in Australia and New Zealand, spoke at the close of the rally. Given the unpopularity of the apartheid system in Australia and elsewhere, he pointed out, supporters of Pretoria do not openly support apartheid. Instead they say, "I don't support apartheid, but . . ." He called on the crowd to raise the issue of apartheid confidently in every possible forum to "counter the 'but'" and to help build bigger and broader demonstrations in the future. □

Anti-apartheid protest attacked in Senegal

A demonstration in support of the struggle against the racist South African system of apartheid was attacked and broken up by police in the West African country of Senegal August 22. Fifteen political figures and activists were arrested for participating in the action, which had been banned.

The demonstration was called by an alliance of five opposition parties: the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS, the main bourgeois opposition party), the Democratic League/Movement for the Party of Labor (LD/MPT), the Socialist Workers Organization (OST, Senegalese section of the Fourth International), the And-Jéf/Revolutionary Movement for the New Democracy (AJ/MRDN), and the Democratic People's Union (UDP).

The Senegalese government of Abdou Diouf, which has close ties with the French

government and generally follows a proimperialist foreign policy course, prohibited the demonstration. But that did not prevent thousands of protesters from turning out anyway in Dakar, the capital.

A day after the action was broken up, PDS leader Abdoulaye Wade, LD/MPT leader Abdoulaye Bathily, and 13 other activists were arrested on charges of participating in "an unauthorized demonstration on a public street." A week later, following a three-day trial, the charges were dismissed.

Correction

In our September 9 issue we incorrectly reported the number of women delegates at the recent national convention of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. The correct figure was 37 women out of 70 delegates.

Socialist ACTION

A revolutionary socialist weekly published in London.

"The British and United States governments have openly emerged once more as the main international supporters of the murderous apartheid regime in South Africa," wrote *Socialist Action* in a front-page article August 2. The veto by these two governments of a United Nations resolution calling for "voluntary" sanctions against Pretoria "shows clearly that they intend to continue to prop up the Botha regime," the article stated.

"The reasons for this policy are not hard to find," it continued. "Britain is the largest investor in the South African economy — with the US the second largest. Britain's direct investments are worth an estimated £5 billion, with a further £6 billion in loans and shareholdings. Over half of the 2,000 foreign-owned companies in the apartheid state are controlled from the UK."

The article argued that the response of Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock to the Conservative government's support for apartheid has been inadequate. His proposal for an end to new investments in South Africa, it stated, amounts to "only painless sacrifices for imperialism."

"The labour movement should instead build a campaign to break all links with apartheid — a campaign which will have to include winning the labour movement to action against both the British government and the companies that profit from the South African regime. It means the labour movement also directly supporting the black struggle in South Africa itself. . . .

"Socialists in Britain have a special responsibility to build a mass campaign against Britain's complicity in apartheid. The labour movement should organise immediately to send delegations to meet with the leaders of the black masses in South Africa. It should link this move to demands for the ending of all diplomatic links, for a boycott of trade with the regime and of all South African goods — and for a boycott of firms which sustain the South African regime."

The article ended with a brief summary of the action taken by dock workers in Southampton to block the shipment of machine tools to the South African arms industry.

Internationalen

"The International," weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International. Published in Stockholm.

The August 8 issue reported on an appeal by members of the Metalworkers' Union, Sweden's largest union, calling for a boycott of South Africa.

"The developments in South Africa today," *Internationalen* wrote, "call for international solidarity. Repression is continually sharpening as resistance increases, and greater support than ever is needed.

"The Metalworkers' congress [in September] offers a good opportunity to advance solidarity with the Black struggle in South Africa. Before this year's congress there are motions from a series of workplaces organized by the Metalworkers calling for a halt to trade with South Africa and the divestment of Swedish enterprises there."

Internationalen reported on the formation of a group called "Metalworkers Against Apartheid," which has launched an educational campaign in the union. The newspaper reprinted this group's appeal to the delegates of the Metalworkers' congress.

The appeal concluded, "we — metalworkers, among others, at enterprises with investments in and trade with South Africa — urge the delegates to the congress, in solidarity with our Black brothers and sisters, to vote for measures that can contribute to totally isolating the racist regime."

WAS TUN

SOZIALISTISCHE ZEITUNG

"What Is to Be Done," a socialist newspaper published fortnightly in Frankfurt, West Germany, by the International Marxist Group (IGM), the German section of the Fourth International.

The August 15 *Was Tun* ran a front-page statement under the headline, "Boycott the Apartheid State." It began:

"Boycott — from day to day, South African Blacks are wielding this old instrument of the workers' movement as a weapon against the state of emergency and against the apartheid system. From school boycotts this has now expanded to boycotts of white businesses, using the limited buying power of the Black majority itself as an effective means of pressure.

"In the Federal Republic [of Germany], however, the employers and the federal government concur: economic sanctions, let alone a boycott, do not apply pressure, but directly harm Black workers in particular. . . .

"While the dispossession of the Blacks in their own country has built up a social charge that is now exploding in revolt, the capitalist economic powers are increasing their business dealings with apartheid. Although the South African economic crisis and the growing political uncertainty have made other banks and investors cautious, West German capital is eagerly jumping into the breach. The Dresdner Bank's notorious South African dealings are just the tip of the iceberg: of the 13 billion *Deuschemarks* in international loans that the racists obtained between 1982 and 1984, West

German banks were accountable for 2 billion in 1984 alone.

"The arguments of the opponents of a boycott are extremely thin. Will a boycott harm the Blacks? The loans of recent years have not prevented 3 million (about 30 percent) of the predominantly Black South African working class from being unemployed. And why are the so-called 'victims' themselves demanding boycott actions, and using them, with even greater sacrifice, against the state of emergency in their own country?"

Was Tun went on: "All opponents of the apartheid regime must demand that the federal government impose a total and effective boycott — as some of the large U.S. unions have been demanding of the Reagan administration for some time. This means: Break all economic and trade links!"

bresche

Fortnightly German-language organ of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), published in Zurich, Switzerland.

"Boycott South Africa!" declared the main front-page headline of the August 19 issue of *Bresche*.

An editorial statement, also on the front page, began, "Day after day the same image: Coffins in a restless sea of Black fists, thousands of demonstrators with sorrowful and defiant songs, flags with the colors of the African National Congress (ANC) and the purple robes of priests and bishops, white and Black police with heavy weapons and ferocious masks on top of their armored cars, and the din of helicopters above the throngs.

"The Black ghettos burn, costing dozens of new deaths each week. The racists are reacting with fear. And the imperialists are getting concerned. It is not the deaths that are bringing them into action, but the danger of a massive eruption of the South African volcano. Too many economic and strategic interests of the capitalist West are at stake for them to look on passively. . . .

"Racist oppression, economic superexploitation, political dictatorship, and the expropriation of the land by big white landlords are four factors that have shaken the country for decades. Because of this, a genuine Black industrial proletariat has come into being, which has fought for extensive residency rights in the urban centers. The economic crisis and growing unemployment have only added fuel to this struggle.

"In alliance with the youth and other inhabitants of the ghettos, the Black working class is today forming the social spearhead of the mobilizations for the total liberation of the oppressed."

Bresche continued, "That is why the West-

ern capitalists are calling on the South African regime to carry out reforms in the direction of moderating or abolishing the apartheid system, before it is too late."

But reforms will not work, *Bresche* pointed out. "The Black population wants nothing less than full freedoms: 'one-person, one-vote.' . . . The undernourished masses in the Bantustans are crying out that the land must be redistributed. This hunger for freedom, justice, land, and an adequate income will not be satisfied with a couple of crumbs; it has a revolutionary explosive force."

Bresche concluded, "The key task in the Western countries is more urgent than ever — the complete isolation of the racist regime."

klasse-kampen

"Class Struggle," published weekly in Copenhagen by the Socialist Workers Party (SAP), Danish section of the Fourth International.

The August 22–28 issue carried an editorial headlined "Boycott racists," which began, "South Africa is on fire. A revolution is beginning in which an oppressed people is trying to take power away from imperialism's cop in Southern Africa — the brutal South African apartheid regime headed by a former Nazi.

"A victorious revolution, in which South Africa's Black population takes power, would send shock waves through the entire world imperialist system. For years, capitalist politicians throughout the world have done what they can to keep South Africa as part of the capitalist world.

"This has often meant a balancing act for many capitalist governments. Here in Denmark the government also has to take into account the extensive opposition to apartheid and racism. The South African regime's oppression and barbarism is so obvious today that the Danish government *must* do something. Ministers and bourgeois politicians talk tough against the South African racists; they have even shut down the general consulate. This seems severe, but it's penny-ante.

"This is the same Danish government that, despite its reduction of coal imports from South Africa, has been unwilling to halt A.P. Møller's transport of oil to that country."

Klassekampen cited other examples of the government's refusal to act against the apartheid regime. Then, continuing, it stated, "In practice the government says one thing and does another. It will not take the step, which is possible for Denmark, to weaken the South African regime. It just says one thing and does another, when the point is to fight racism inside Denmark's own borders."

The government proposes education to combat racism against refugees and immigrants in Denmark. But, "it is the government itself," *Klassekampen* said, "that has been creating a social foundation giving this plague, racism, more fertile soil. Not only with its deeply cyn-

ical cutbacks, but also directly with remarks against refugees from, among others, Justice Minister Eric Ninn-Hansen.

"To hand over the struggle against racism in Denmark to this government will not be effective. No more than handing over to it the fight against imperialism's watchdog in southern Africa — Botha's apartheid regime."

Socialist Action

A fortnightly newspaper published in Auckland, New Zealand, that reflects the views of the Socialist Action League, New Zealand section of the Fourth International.

The main article on the front page of the August 9 issue was headlined "South African rulers escalate racist terror."

Helen Sheridan wrote: "The state of emergency imposed by the white minority regime in South Africa has so far failed to quench the growing upsurge of rebellion among the oppressed Black masses of that country.

"Mass protests against apartheid are continuing. On July 23, for example, 50,000 Blacks marched through the Black township of KwaThema. The procession ended at the graves of 15 recent victims of the government's terror. They chanted, 'We shall be free' and voiced support for the call by the outlawed African National Congress for a struggle to bring down the apartheid regime."

After reviewing the scope of the protests in South Africa itself, Sheridan took up the claim that instances of violence by Blacks against other Blacks who collaborate with the regime justify the government's brutal crackdown.

"The source of violence in South Africa," she said, "is the racist ruling class which deprives the Black majority of all human rights and is attempting to drown a popular revolt against apartheid in blood. The Black freedom fighters have the right to win their liberation by any means necessary."

The article concluded by addressing the anti-apartheid movement in New Zealand. "Anti-apartheid and antiwar fighters should raise their voices against the state of emergency and continued political, military, and economic support to apartheid from other imperialist powers."

Rouge

"Red," weekly newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International. Published in Paris.

In two full-page articles by Jean-Jacques Laredo, *Rouge* commented on the recent sanctions against South Africa announced by French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius.

Laredo noted France's profitable commercial relations with South Africa, pointing out that "France is South Africa's fifth-largest commercial partner," with investments estimated at 14 billion francs (US\$1.6 billion).

France purchases precious metals such as platinum, vanadium, diamonds, and gold from South Africa and is South Africa's largest purchaser of coal.

It was a French consortium that built South Africa's nuclear facilities, financed with loans from French banks. Loans by French banks jumped 90.3 percent from mid-1982 to the end of 1984 over the previous three-and-a-half-year period, and "secret" arms sales were exposed in 1982.

Laredo explained that "the French decisions consist of three points. Immediate recall of the ambassador to Pretoria, suspension of all new French investment, . . . and submission to the United Nations Security Council of a draft resolution condemning South Africa and proposing 'precise measures' for the international community."

The *Rouge* correspondent commented that "for the first time a French government is taking a leading position against apartheid, especially as compared with the other Western countries."

However, Laredo went on, "The freeze measure does not affect Franco-South African collaboration. This is where the very limited character of Fabius' decision becomes apparent."

"Investment does not mean commerce, and economic relations between the two countries continue. French banks, all nationalized as they are, will continue their bank loans to apartheid, to South African state institutions." He pointed out that the French oil company Total will continue to supply fuel to the South African military and police, and that the French government declaration came within 24 hours of the announcement that the nuclear facility at Koeberg, built by the French state-owned Framatome, was finally operational.

From this, Laredo stressed, it is clear that French "governmental collaboration with apartheid is far from ended."

THE MILITANT

A revolutionary socialist weekly published in New York City.

The *Militant* published a special issue on August 30, cutting short its scheduled summer break in order to respond to the upsurge in South Africa and the wave of anti-apartheid protests in the United States.

A front-page editorial demanded, "Break U.S. ties with apartheid — boycott racist South Africa."

It reviewed a number of the recent U.S. protest actions, noting the increased participation of the trade union movement as a reflection of "the identification of U.S. working people with the struggle of their Black brothers and sisters for basic democratic rights and a decent standard of living."

"Why has South Africa, more than any other state in the world, become such a target of protests," the editorial asked. "The answer can be summed up in one word: *apartheid*." A section

of the editorial described the workings of apartheid and its effects on the Black population.

The *Militant* characterized the South African struggle as "a fight for national liberation being waged by the vast majority against a small, isolated minority."

"It's a *revolutionary* struggle," the editors stated, "because the apartheid state and the apartheid social system are so intertwined that only a change on the scale of a revolution — the overthrow of the current state power — can put an end to this violent, brutal system.

"And it is a *democratic* struggle.

"First and foremost, it is a fight for *land*, a struggle by the majority to get back the land that was stolen from them through force and violence over a period of decades. . . .

"South Africa doesn't exist as a nation today. There is the armed state power of the ruling white minority, and there is the impoverished, oppressed Black majority. Blacks are fighting to open the door to uniting and developing their country, their *entire* country.

"But the forging of a South African nation from the various tribal, regional, and language

groups can never happen while apartheid reigns."

The editorial quoted from the Freedom Charter, put forward by the African National Congress (ANC) and other groups, which explains many of these demands. The Freedom Charter was reprinted in full elsewhere in the same issue.

The *Militant* commented that the ANC has emerged "as the leading force fighting for the national democratic revolution. It has earned its place as the legitimate representative of the aspirations of the oppressed Black majority and all those — of whatever race — who want to see an end to apartheid. . . .

"The revolutionary democratic program of the ANC deserves the support of every working person, every democrat, everyone who believes in social justice."

The editorial concluded that "what happens in South Africa is of the utmost importance to the entire world" and that "working people in the United States have the biggest responsibility and the biggest opportunity of all to aid the fight against apartheid."

Indonesian trade union leaders executed

By Dave Deutschmann

SYDNEY — At least two prominent political prisoners have been executed by the Indonesian government in recent months. Several more former leaders of the trade union movement and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) are threatened with execution.

Some 230 political prisoners are still held in Indonesian jails, with at least 53 PKI members under sentence of death.

All these prisoners — and conceivably many more — have been held for 17 years or more. Most of them were arrested in 1967 or 1968, some two years after the October 1965 military coup that overthrew the Sukarno government.

This imperialist-backed coup led to the brutal destruction of the trade union movement and the 3 million-member PKI. Several hundred thousand unionists and PKI members were massacred in the weeks and months following the coup.

Among those who managed to evade arrest at the time was Mohammed Munir, one of those recently executed. Since 1952, Munir had been the general secretary of the All-Indonesian Central Organization of Trade Unions (SOBSI), the largest trade union in the country until it was banned in 1965. Munir was also a member of the PKI's political bureau.

According to the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, Munir's secret execution on May 14 was the first known execution in Indonesia since 1967.

The SOBSI's assistant general secretary, Ruslan Wijayasastra, is another leader General Suharto has targeted for execution. Wijayasastra has also been imprisoned since

1968. Human rights organizations in Western Europe report that his whereabouts are unknown, increasing fears that he may have been executed along with Munir.

An article in the April 12 *Kompas*, a Jakarta daily newspaper, pointed out that further executions are being prepared by the military regime. The newspaper reported that the chief of police of East Java had been requested by the public prosecutor's office in the province to appoint a firing squad and a team of doctors for the executions of three former PKI leaders.

Those listed by *Kompas* were Rustomo, Djoko Untung, and Gatot Sutaryo — all of whom had held leading positions in the PKI in the East Java Province and had evaded arrest until 1967 or 1968.

Recent reports indicate that Rustomo, a former member of the PKI central committee, was executed in late July on Madura Island off the coast of Java. He was sentenced to death in January 1975, after being charged with trying to establish PKI influence in the Indonesian Armed Forces.

News of the executions and those still pending has been featured prominently in the press in Australia and the Netherlands. Protests from the Netherlands played a role in delaying scheduled executions in 1975 and 1976.

The recent public announcement in Indonesia that Suharto had rejected the legal appeals of those still in detention suggests that the military regime is determined to proceed with wiping out all union and PKI leaders — a goal set by itself and its imperialist backers almost two decades ago. □

10 AND 20 YEARS AGO

Intercontinental Press

Africa Asia Europe Oceania the Americas

September 15, 1975

An estimated 5,000 persons, including 200 military police and troops from various army, navy, and air force units, marched in front of the presidential palace in Lisbon September 1 to protest against sending more Portuguese troops to the African colony of Angola.

"The noticeable presence of numerous soldiers from various companies," a report in the September 2 Lisbon daily *Jornal Novo* commented, "made this one of the largest, if not the largest, demonstration of its kind in Portugal so far."

The protesting troops, some of whom were scheduled to leave for Angola the same night, chanted with the other demonstrators, "No more troops to Angola!" "Bring our soldiers home!" and "No to a new colonial war!"

One of the soldiers told a reporter, "I'm not going to Angola; I don't care what happens." Another said, referring to the Angolans, "It is necessary to give them their independence . . . the rest is up to them."

According to *New York Times* correspondent Marvine Howe, several thousand trade unionists and students marched with the troops. They carried banners reading, "Workers, peasants and soldiers in the same fight for a real democracy."

Jornal Novo reported, "Various messages of solidarity with the troops of the military police were read, in particular from several factories (which were greeted with cries of 'long live the working class'), as the demonstration left along the road from São Bento."

The demonstrators said that a similar march would be held September 5 and that they would continue protesting "until we get what we want."

WORLD OUTLOOK

PERSPECTIVE MONDIALE

(Predecessor of *Intercontinental Press*)

September 17, 1965

In an effort to block U.S. use of Itazuke airport [in Japan] as a base for B-52s in the war in Vietnam, the Fukouka Prefectural Congress Against the Revision of the Constitution and Nuclear Arming began picketing the airport August 25.

About 100 members set up a barricade of six wooden frames, each about 5 feet high and 13 feet wide on a highway near the end of one of the runways. They ran up 20 red flags on 23-foot poles attached to four cars. Airport officials feared these would interfere with planes.

Police sought to remove the barricades. The leaders of the demonstrators, all Socialists, resisted and were arrested. They said that the demonstration would go on indefinitely.

Australian SWP formalizes split

Asserts Fourth International 'should never have been formed'

By Doug Jenness

When subscribers to *Direct Action*, a weekly newspaper published in Sydney by the Australian Socialist Workers Party, received the August 28 issue and turned to page 19, they learned that the National Committee of the Australian SWP had just voted unanimously to quit the Fourth International (see article on page 569). The decision was made at a meeting on August 16-18.

From its founding in 1972, the Australian SWP (called Socialist Workers League until January 1976) has been affiliated to the Fourth International. It has been one of its largest sections.

The walkout of the SWP's National Committee consummates and formalizes a split that began two years ago, when a majority of the party's leadership took the unprecedented action of breaking off all relations with selected parties of the International.

This began in August 1983 when it severed contact with the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. It followed up by cutting off relations with the Socialist Action League and the Revolutionary Workers League, the New Zealand and Canadian sections of the Fourth International, respectively.

Direct Action sums up the main point of the report on leaving the International: "Our political position is a total negation of the whole reason for the existence of the Fourth International."

SWP National Secretary Jim Percy is quoted in the article as stating, "I think it was wrong to form the Fourth International in the first place."

The Australian SWP National Committee contends that the Fourth International is an obstacle to building the kind of international movement it says is needed. It should, they think, be gotten rid of.

SWP's political degeneration

The political basis on which this conclusion rests has been developing for some time, as the SWP leadership has given up any working-class foundation for its political perspective. This has now reached the point where the proletarian orientation and communist continuity of the Fourth International constitute an intolerable straitjacket.

At the heart of this degeneration is the overall deproletarianization of the Australian SWP — in its composition, functioning, and political outlook.

The SWP leadership supported and began carrying out the decision of the 1979 World Congress of the Fourth International to make a radical turn in each country toward proletarianizing the parties of the International.

But the SWP explicitly reversed this course several years ago.

Larry Seigle, a leader of the U.S. SWP, described this development and its adverse consequences in a report given to the U.S. SWP National Committee in August 1983. The report is reprinted in this issue along with several other documents and articles relating to the evolution of the Australian SWP's leadership.

Among the consequences Seigle pointed to was the development of an increasingly sectarian policy toward the Australian Labor Party. This question was also taken up by a group of Fourth Internationalists who were purged from the Australian SWP nearly two years ago. Their appeal, which also appears in this issue, notes that the SWP leadership's position in the December 1984 Australian elections showed that this error had been deepened. In those elections, the SWP campaigned for the petty-bourgeois Nuclear Disarmament Party against the candidates of the Labor Party.¹

Seigle also noted that in maneuvering with right-wing Croatian nationalists in Australia, the SWP leadership abandoned a working-class perspective on the national question.

The SWP's approach to electoral action, allies, unity discussions with other groups, the peace movement, and all other political activities is classless. It fetishizes mass action regardless of its class content.

Acceptance of Stalinist ideas

Moreover, as part of the political goulash it has cooked up, the SWP National Committee has been selectively adopting and defending views, actions, and bureaucratic modes of functioning common to Stalinist organizations. This has deepened with the SWP's political collaboration and unity maneuvers with the Socialist Party of Australia. (The SPA is more loyal to the political line of Moscow than is the larger "Eurocommunist" Communist Party of Australia, from which it split in 1971.)

The euphoric account in *Direct Action* of the World Youth Festival in Moscow by Margo Condoleon, one of the SWP's youth leaders, illustrates the extent to which the Australian SWP leadership has accepted the Stalinist political framework. Condoleon excitedly tells about the "themes of peace and anti-imperialist solidarity" that prevailed in Moscow. The political peak was reached, she enthusiastically reports, in the speech by Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. (This rave review of the Moscow festival is reprinted in this issue.)

1. A statement of the Australian SWP's stand on the 1984 elections was reprinted as a document in the Dec. 24, 1984, issue of *IP*.

Another rave review, of the Australian film *Red Matildas*, is also reprinted in this issue from *Direct Action*. It presents a glowing account of the Stalinist CPA in the 1930s, when it was "very different" and more "successful" than the "Eurocommunist" party it is today. This tribute accepts as a matter of course the "popular front" class-collaborationist line of the CPA in the 1930s.

The article by U.S. SWP leader Steve Clark in this issue of *IP* describes the Australian leadership's inability to recognize why the Vietnamese Communist Party was capable of leading the national liberation struggle to victory over U.S. imperialism in 1975. This victory was the result of the Vietnamese Communists' break a quarter of a century earlier from the Stalinist course of subordinating the independence struggle to the class-collaborationist diplomacy of the Soviet government.

The Australian SWP leaders, however, defend the Stalinist policies that led to the defeat of the Vietnamese independence struggle in 1945-47. They even go so far as to justify the murder of Fourth Internationalists and other proindependence forces who refused to submit to this betrayal of the national liberation struggle.

The SWP leadership's penchant for "tough" methods is not unknown in Australia. A *Melbourne Sun* reporter, for example, captured this characteristic in his article, "Hard-talking Marxist says his peace," reprinted in this issue. He noted that SWP National Secretary Jim Percy "has a touch of the union boss about him. . . ."

'Don't separate from Stalinist current'

The SWP National Committee asserts that it is time to "break with the idea that having an alternative view of Stalinism justifies being in a separate 'historic current.'" The "historic current" not to be separated from, according to the SWP National Committee, is the Stalinist one. Failing to understand this, they say, was the error of Leon Trotsky and the other leaders of the Communist International who insisted on fighting to the end against the Stalinists' course of breaking from the proletarian internationalism of the Comintern in Lenin's time.

Percy told the Australian SWP National Committee that "the organisational form [of the Fourth International] cut off Trotsky and the Trotskyists from any other possibility of the development of the Communist movement."

This outrageously turns the facts upside down. It wasn't the "organization form" of the Fourth International that "cut off" Trotsky, who had been a prominent leader of the Oc-



James P. Cannon (left), Pierre Frank (center), and Peng Shu-tse were leading members of the U.S., French, and Chinese sections of the Communist International in the 1920s. Their fight to continue the proletarian international perspectives of the Comintern led to a growing divergence from the course of the emerging Stalinist bureaucracy. Their continued commitment to Leninism, after they and many others were purged from the Comintern, led to the birth of the Fourth International.

tober 1917 Russian revolution, of the world's first workers' and peasants' republic, and of the Communist International. Rather, it was the Stalinist bureaucracy that expelled him from the Soviet Communist Party and the Comintern, deported him from the USSR, and mercilessly hounded him in exile. When that wasn't enough to silence him, Stalin's murder machine finally cut him down in cold blood in Mexico in 1940.

This same Stalinist bureaucracy murdered thousands of other revolutionists, not only in the USSR, but in other countries as well. And many thousands more were bureaucratically purged from the Comintern.

Defense of Bolshevism

Contrary to what the Australian SWP National Committee asserts, the Bolshevik-Leninists who were leaders of the Comintern and who later became part of the Fourth International did not start with an "alternative view of Stalinism."

They started by defending Bolshevik policies against the "second wave of Menshevism," as Trotsky accurately labeled the Stalinist policies. And they carried out and justified their actions from that perspective. In continuing to act as communists they confronted the *fact* of a growing divergence between their class-struggle orientation and the deepening political degeneration of the International.

This process of degeneration had begun in the mid-1920s, as a privileged bureaucratic layer began to emerge in the Soviet Union and following the defeat of several promising revolutionary openings.

The bureaucratization of the Soviet Communist Party after Lenin's death in early 1924 led, over time, to the rotting out of the Comintern leadership. Under Stalin's command, the indigenous leaderships of the parties of the International were purged. By the early 1930s most were administered by toadies preoccupied with their own careers, who took their political lead from the Stalinist bureaucrats in the USSR.

Some communist fighters, however, refused to take the path of careerism; nor did they become demoralized and leave revolutionary working-class politics altogether. They lived for the movement and not at the expense of the movement. Most importantly, they did not subordinate the struggles of the working class and oppressed peoples to any other interests. True to the spirit of the *Communist Manifesto*, they had "no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole."

These Bolshevik-Leninists included founding leaders of the Comintern and its parties. Many had served in the central leaderships of the national sections and had been members of the Executive Committee of the International.

They kept on trying to implement the program that had been hammered out in the first five years of the Comintern under Lenin's leadership. They fought for the continuity of Leninism.

But a contradiction developed between their revolutionary proletarian orientation and the reversal of the Leninist program that the Stalinists began to bureaucratically impose on the International. The Stalinists counterposed to Leninism the subordination of the world revolution to the narrow diplomatic aims of the

nationalist-minded, privileged bureaucratic caste that had emerged in the Soviet Union and whose domination was consolidated by the early 1930s.

The Bolshevik-Leninists fought to prevent the Comintern from becoming an instrument of Moscow's class-collaborationist foreign policy, which was destroying it as a formation to advance the world revolution.

When the Bolshevik-Leninists were purged from the Soviet party and then from the sections of the Comintern, they simply continued the fight, in their countries and internationally. For those who refused to give up the communist perspective, there was no choice.

Their orientation at first was to reform the International, salvaging it from the Stalinist bureaucrats who had usurped power.

They continued along a communist course after events in the early 1930s proved that the International could no longer be reformed and was dead as a revolutionary organization.

Born out of big defeats

The Fourth International arose out of big world events. But in contrast to the origins of the first three internationals, the Fourth International was not born out of significant working-class advances. Rather, its formation was objectively rooted in the most crushing defeats ever suffered by the working class.

The principal document at the 1938 congress of the Fourth International, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" (the "Transitional Program"), stated that the International "has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause

for these defeats is to be found in the degeneration and perfidy of the old leadership. The class struggle does not tolerate an interruption. The Third International, following the Second, is dead for purposes of revolution."

The document continued, the Fourth International "has no need of being 'proclaimed.' It exists and it fights."²

Several years before there was an organization called the Fourth International, those revolutionary communists who fought for the continuity of Leninism had in fact become the Fourth International. They had not started with the idea or the tactic of forming a new international. They had not chosen to place themselves outside the Stalinized Comintern and its national sections.

Nor were they out to establish a "Trotskyist" current against the world Stalinist movement. The Fourth International was born out of the struggle to continue communist practice and strategy. The "Trotskyist" label was placed on them by the Stalinists.

Communist leaders in many countries — in the United States, France, Greece, China, and many other countries — continued to participate in and lead the class struggle, striving to establish parties that could lead the working class and its allies along the line of march toward taking political power.

Revolutionary communist fighters in the United States, for example, led the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes that helped pave the way for organizing industrial unions in an entire section of the country and began winning a new generation to communism. In the same year, they fused with other revolutionary working-class fighters who had helped lead the successful auto workers' strike in Toledo, Ohio.

The parties of the Fourth International, due to the unfavorable objective conditions in which they were born, were relatively small groups engaged primarily in propaganda. But many of them proved that, when opportunities arose, they were capable of leading masses of workers in struggle.

These class-struggle experiences and concrete steps in building parties were part and parcel of the fight to continue the Leninist proletarian international program.

The organizational structuring of the Fourth International reflected this reality, taking various international forms before its official foundation in 1938. In the face of very difficult objective circumstances, this step gave the communist vanguard greater capacity to hold its forces together and sustain its programmatic continuity. It offered more public cohesion to the only international proletarian revolutionary current at the time. This was especially important considering the strong position the Social Democrats and Stalinists continued to hold in the working class movement in relation to the small forces of the Fourth International.

This is how the international structuring of

the communist workers' movement has always proceeded — by reflecting an already developing reality. This was how the International Working Men's Association (the First International), the Second International, and the Communist (Third) International came into being.

A few weeks after the Communist International was formally constituted in 1919, Lenin explained that, "The Third International actually emerged in 1918, when the long years of struggle against opportunism and social-chauvinism, especially during the war, led to the formation of Communist Parties in a number of countries. Officially, the Third International was founded at its First Congress, in March 1919, in Moscow."³

It is from this vantage point that we can get the clearest view of the place, limits, and sources of strength of the Fourth International when it was born.

Its place was being the only international revolutionary current meriting the name. This remained the case until the victory of the Cuban revolution in 1959.

Its limits were determined by the relatively small number of revolutionary fighters organized in its sections, especially relative to the mass reformist parties led by the Stalinists and Social Democrats.

Its greatest source of strength was that it continued to be true to the line of march of the working-class vanguard, at least in its most conscious and generalized expression, since 1847. It assembled fighters embodying considerable class-struggle experience and revolutionary continuity.

The Fourth International was organized by those who were confident that out of the gigantic convulsions of world capitalism the toilers would find opportunities for making new advances, including big revolutionary conquests. And in the course of these advances, the experience of millions of revolutionary fighters will lead them to communism.

Stance toward new revolutionary leaderships

The Australian SWP leadership, however, in order to prove that the Fourth International is an obstacle that should be removed, contends that it is congenitally incapable of recognizing, understanding, and relating to revolutionary leaderships that emerge outside the framework of the Fourth International.

Australian SWP leader Percy, for example, asserts that what the Fourth International is "really worried about is the Soviet Union. The Trotskyist view of Stalinism stands in the way of understanding the importance of what is happening in Cuba."

This astounding proposition assumes that the Castro leadership is at least a little bit Stalinist, perhaps the left face of the Stalinist current on a world scale. The conclusion is that Stalinist policies are at least somewhat revolutionary; that the Soviet bureaucracy's line can

point the way forward.

Percy then adds, "It was wrong in the 1960s, with the Cuban Revolution, not to fundamentally reorient the Fourth International then."

First, these contentions are false. Second, they are either slanders or based on total ignorance. They fall apart at the first touch as the building blocks of a case to call for the dissolution of the International.

The fact is that the uncompromising, working-class vanguard fighters of the Fourth International were particularly well-prepared to understand and appreciate the significance of the Cuban revolution and its leadership. We were able to rapidly recognize fellow revolutionists when they appeared and give them our utmost support.

The Fourth International, far from failing to appreciate the historic significance of the extension of the socialist revolution to the Americas under a revolutionary leadership, immediately hailed it, defended it against aggression and slander, explained it, learned from it, reunited its own divided forces in agreement over it, and was politically inspired and strengthened by it.

The parties of the International played a key role in their countries in organizing a campaign to get out the truth about Cuba. We helped set up committees, organize trips to Cuba, publish pamphlets with speeches by Fidel Castro and other Cuban revolutionary leaders, and carry out many other activities.

We carried out the same kind of vigorous solidarity campaign in defense of the Algerian struggle against French colonialism. This effort, spearheaded by the French section, played a big role in aiding the Algerian revolution and winning respect for the International.

We approached the defense of these revolutions with the same proletarian internationalist responsibility we were later to demonstrate in defending the Vietnamese, Grenada, and Nicaraguan revolutions.

The seriousness and energy put into the campaign in defense of the Cuban revolution helped the Fourth International win important reinforcements.

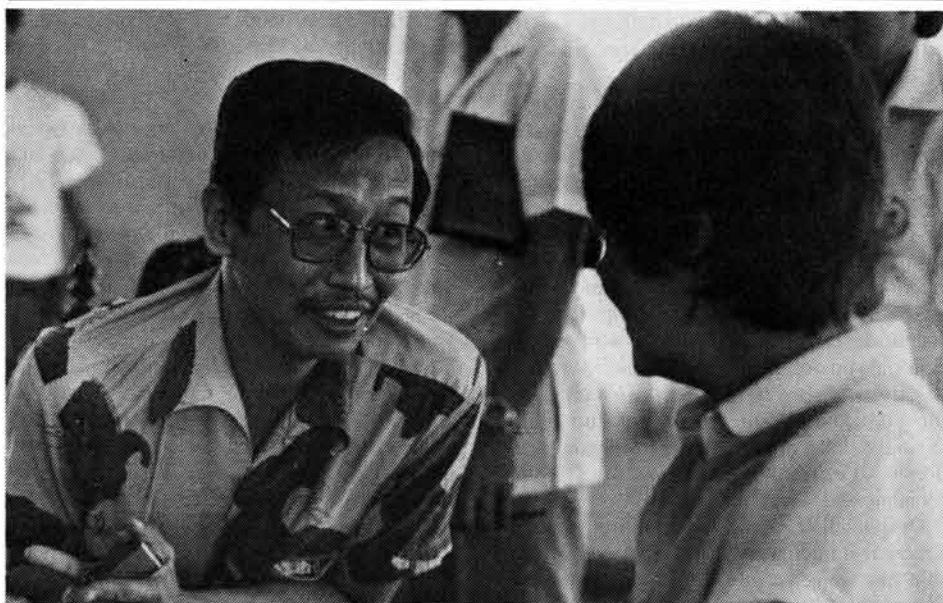
We understood from the outset the tremendous attraction to revolutionary-minded youth of a leadership that was not tainted by the corruption, cynicism, and bureaucratic methods of Stalinism and Social Democracy, a leadership that took the moral high ground in its actions.

Young fighters were attracted to the Castro leadership because from the beginning it proved that it had no interests separate and apart from those of the toilers, that it used state power to selflessly aid the struggle of the oppressed and exploited around the world, and that it was an uncompromising foe of imperialism.

The Cuban revolution won fighters around the world to take the communist road, and helped win them to organizations in their countries that totally identified with the Cuban revolution and were unswervingly combating imperialist oppression and capitalist exploitation.

2. Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), p. 151.

3. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), Vol. 29, p. 306.



Deb Shnookal (right), a long-time leader of the Australian Socialist Workers Party, refused to go along with course that led to walkout from Fourth International.

Above she is interviewing Philippine Communist Party leader Jose Maria Sison in 1984. The interview appeared in several Fourth International publications including *Inprecor*, *International Viewpoint*, *Intercontinental Press*, and the press of some sections.

Moreover, our experience in the labor movement of defending and fighting for a revolutionary orientation against the perspectives of the Stalinists and Social Democrats sharpened our capacity to recognize a leadership that did not emerge out of and is organizationally and politically independent of these class-collaborationist currents and is revolutionary through and through.

Joseph Hansen, a leader of the U.S. SWP and the Fourth International, explained in 1962 that, "The extension of the October 1917 revolution into the Western Hemisphere is a *revolutionary action* far more decisive in the scales than the weight of Cuba's economy in North and South America. This revolution has something *qualitative* about it as a culmination of the overturns that began in Eastern Europe. With its signal that the stage is now opening for non-Stalinist revolutionary leaderships, it even appears as a major turning point in the whole postwar period."⁴ There is every reason — after the Grenada and Nicaraguan revolutions — to reaffirm that judgment.

The response of the Fourth International to the Cuban leadership was also decisive in healing a 10-year split in the movement. This strengthening of the International helped put it in a better position to defend the Cuban revolution, actively participate in the fight against the imperialist intervention in Vietnam, and participate in other important struggles.

The big majority of forces in the Fourth International wholeheartedly welcomed the emergence of the Cuban leadership. They recognized that this confirmed the most fundamental perspective of the Fourth International,

4. Joseph Hansen, *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), p. 157.

that revolutionary currents would arise independent of Stalinist and Social Democratic organizations.

There was a minority of forces in the International who did not see things this way. They rejected the leadership of the Cuban revolution because it did not come from the Fourth International. This sectarian response to the Cuban revolution and its leadership was a prelude to their abandoning revolutionary Marxism and the Fourth International altogether.

Reorientation of Fourth International

The Australian SWP National Committee advises the Fourth International that it should have made a "fundamental reorientation" following the Cuban revolution.

But there is nothing that has stamped the Fourth International more in the past quarter century than the political reorientation that it began in the early 1960s in response to the Cuban revolution — a reorientation that continues.

The conquests of the Cuban workers and peasants helped all revolutionists, including those in the Fourth International, clarify their understanding of several important features of the revolutionary process. Among these are:

1. The revolutionary and weighty role the peasantry can play in the struggle against imperialist oppression and for land. This was demonstrated again in Cuba. Moreover, the course of the revolution showed the decisive importance of forging an alliance of the exploited producers in taking state power and establishing a workers' and peasants' government.

2. The important place that guerrilla warfare, as a specific form of armed struggle, can play at a certain stage of the revolutionary struggle if it is connected to building a mass

revolutionary party that is organizing and leading the working class and peasantry to take political power.

3. The character and tasks of the workers' and farmers' government that emerges as the result of a successful anticapitalist revolution.

4. The relationship between this government and the transition to establishing a workers' state based on new property relations.

5. The historic turning point for the world revolution signaled by its making a mighty advance under the leadership of revolutionary forces that developed outside the Stalinist and Social Democratic parties.

6. The political convergence of the communist leadership in Cuba with other revolutionary forces on a world scale. This convergence encompasses all the forces, including those of the Fourth International, who are charting a course in practice that heads toward reestablishing continuity with the internationalist program and strategy of the Communist International in Lenin's time.

7. The decisive weight in world politics of the workers' state in the Soviet Union. Without that revolutionary conquest the Cuban revolution would not have been able to survive. This has richly reconfirmed the historic view of the Fourth International that the progressive character of the workers' states in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China is a far more weighty factor for the world revolution than the obstacles represented by the Stalinist bureaucracies.

The lessons of the Cuban experience helped us take a fresh look at the overturn of capitalist rule in Eastern Europe, China, and Vietnam, and see more clearly than we had at the time the process by which workers' states were established in those countries. It also helped us better understand the Algerian revolution between 1962 and 1965, where the Fourth International recognized that a workers' and farmers' government had been established.

Moreover, the reorientation of the Fourth International in response to Cuba politically prepared us to understand and orient toward the Nicaraguan and Grenada revolutions.

The emergence of these two anticapitalist revolutions in the same region as Cuba, both led by revolutionary leaderships, served to underline that the leadership breakthrough represented by the Cuban victory — like the Cuban revolution itself — was not an exception.

Centrality of Nicaragua campaign

The report adopted by the Australian SWP National Committee asks rhetorically, "But what do these momentous developments mean for the role of the Fourth International? Apparently very little at all."

This is simply a lie. The Fourth International for the past six years has been marked by the centrality of its campaign in solidarity with Nicaragua. Hundreds of members of the International from many different countries have gone to Nicaragua on tours or to participate in work brigades. The press of the sections has been campaigning in solidarity with the revolution and explaining its significance. We have

published and distributed books and pamphlets in different languages to get out the truth about the revolution.

We have also helped organize and lead actions against U.S. government intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. The main action proposal adopted by the February 1985 World Congress of the International unani- mously called for an all-out international cam- paign to support the April 20 protests initiated by antiwar groups in the United States.

The Australian SWP leadership contends that the Fourth International's "blinkers about Stalinism" prevented it from relating properly to the Vietnamese revolution and appreciating the role of its leadership.

But a question naturally arises here: what would the international struggle against U.S. imperialist aggression in Indochina have been like if the Fourth International had not been formed, if its revolutionary continuity had been broken, as the Australian SWP National Committee proposes?

The revolutionary fighters of the Fourth International in many countries, who refused to subordinate the fight against Washington to the class-collaborationist schemes of the Stalin- ists, Social Democrats, and pacifists, played a decisive role in making the international move- ment against the Vietnam War as broad and ef- fective as it became.

In the United States, where the movement was the largest and began, toward the end, to have a profound impact on working people — both in and out of uniform — the Stalinists continually attempted to subordinate the fight against the war to capitalist electoralism.

The Socialist Workers Party, however, fought to build a movement that concentrated its fire on the U.S. government and had the perspective of involving the unions and en- listed soldiers.

It was the uncompromising fight against U.S. aggression in Indochina and solidarity with the Vietnamese fighters waged by the Fourth International that attracted and won the first forces in many countries, including Aus- tralia. Some of them were won from out of the Communist Party. It was from this experience in the 1960s and 1970s that an entire genera- tion of young fighters in Australia became rev- olutionary communists. Some of them con- tinue to hold that perspective today.

No concrete international alternative

Despite its view that the Fourth Interna- tional's "very existence" is an insurmountable roadblock to "building a new international rev- olutionary movement — one with mass influ- ence," the Australian SWP National Commit- tee offers no concrete alternative.

The report in *Direct Action* offers only the most banal slogans, empty of political content. "Dynamic and creative" politics are what is needed, we are told. The SWP has "other things to do" than spend time in the Fourth International. But these "other things" remain unexplained.

Despite its protestation that its split from the Fourth International "is not a cavalier deci-

sion," the SWP National Committee cavalierly leaves without saying anything specific about its international perspectives.

It makes no pretense of forming a new inter- national organization. In fact, its main interna- tional friends of the last couple of years are not even mentioned in the first public announce- ment of the split. One of these is a small circle in Berkeley, California, that publishes the *North Star* magazine and is "dynamically and creatively" involved in the Democratic Party.

The Australian SWP leadership has also sought to establish ties with a wing of the editorial board of the *Guardian*, a radical weekly published in New York, which called for political support to one of the major capitalist tickets in the 1984 presidential elec- tions — Democratic Party candidates Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro.

Despite all of its talk about turning "towards a more real internationalism," the SWP leader- ship has walked away from the only revolu- tionary international organization that it could be part of today. And by doing so, it moves further away from, not closer to, the political convergence with revolutionary forces in the Caribbean and Central America.

Any idea that the Australian SWP (or any other merely national organization) can main- tain a revolutionary internationalist perspec- tive is pure bravado.

This is true even within the framework of the Fourth International. The Fourth Interna- tional cannot simply be a collection of inter- nationalist parties, each trying to make a breakthrough in their country. It represents the continuity with the internationalist program and strategy of the Communist International in Lenin's time.

The Australian SWP leadership's decision to build a "national" communist current will accelerate its political degeneration and deepen its adaptation to Australian nationalism. When "hard-talking" Percy tells the *Melbourne Sun* reporter that, "I'm Aussie all right. You can't take that away from me," the message is *na- tional* pride, not *class* pride.

It is an arrogant stance and political orienta- tion that will be immediately spotted for what it is, and rejected, by every Australian Aborigine and other victim of "Aussie" im- perialism, as well as by all revolutionary- minded workers and farmers in Australia.

Australian Fourth Internationalists

When the Australian SWP National Com- mittee began its break from the Fourth Interna- tional, a big part of the core of the long-time, polit- ical leaders of the organization refused to go along. When many of them were purged in 1983, they stated in their appeal at the time, "We will not accept the leadership majority moving to take the party out of the Fourth International."

As Fourth Internationalists they are continu- ing the course of constructing a revolutionary communist party in Australia.

Among them are former members of the party's National Committee, including Gordon Adler, Lynda Boland, Dave Deutschmann,

Nita Keig, Ron Poulsen, Deb Shnookal, and Lee Walkington. These seven represent a cross section of the diverse origins of the Australian SWP's leadership.

Deutschmann, Keig, Poulsen, and Shnookal served on the Political Committee. Keig and Poulsen were SWP delegates to the 1979 World Congress of the Fourth International. Keig is also a former editor of *Direct Action*.

Boland, Poulsen, and Walkington were cen- tral leaders of the Communist League, a group formed as a result of a 1972 split in the SWP, which reunified with the SWP in 1978.

Adler, Boland, and Walkington are also former members of the Communist Party of Australia. They broke from this organization in the early 1970s because it was not the revolu- tionary Marxist party they sought to build.

Adler was well known in the left in Australia and had been a member of the CPA for nearly 13 years. When he joined the SWP, it attracted wide attention in the radical movement. In an account of his experiences in the CPA that ap- peared in the June 1974 issue of the U.S. magazine *International Socialist Review*, he concluded:

"The step I had taken was only the logical consequence of all my experience. Only those who have lived through years of working in a Stalinist organization, with all its frustrations, can possibly understand what it means to see the burgeoning of new revolutionary forces, armed with the theoretical weapon of Marxism and a firm belief in the possibility of building a revolutionary Marxist party."

World Congress rejects proposal

The Australian SWP delegation to the Feb- ruary 1985 World Congress openly called on the World Congress to do what the National Committee of their party had already done — break relations with the United States SWP, the New Zealand Socialist Action League, the Canadian Revolutionary Workers League, and others in the International. This proposal, however, was rejected.

Australian SWP leaders on the International Executive Committee elected by the World Congress boycotted its first meeting the day after the Congress. Since then the Australian SWP leadership has boycotted every meeting of the elected leadership bodies of the Interna- tional.

The World Congress refused to support their proposal that the Fourth International should dissolve itself — so the Australian SWP leadership turned their backs on the Interna- tional and kept on walking. The Australian SWP National Committee at its meeting in Au- gust simply formalized this walkout.

The members of the SWP National Commit- tee have the right to leave the Fourth Interna- tional, but they have no power to "resign" any- one other than themselves. Those members of the Australian SWP who say no to the National Committee decision will continue to be part of the International. They will build the Aus- tralian section, joining with those who earlier said no to the march of the Australian SWP leadership out of the Fourth International. □

Accommodation to Stalinist positions

Australian SWP leaders endorse 1945 betrayal of Vietnam freedom fight

By Steve Clark

Reading something often tells you more about the author than about the subject. Such is the case with *The Vietnamese Revolution and its leadership*, a pamphlet based on a report unanimously adopted by the National Committee of the Australian Socialist Workers Party in October 1984. The report was delivered by Allen Myers. Readers in the United States were presented with a shortened version of the Australian SWP leadership's pamphlet last April in the inaugural issue of a new magazine called *The North Star*, published in Berkeley, California.

These documents are a bad place to turn for any accurate information about the Vietnamese revolution and its leadership. But they are quite a good place to gain some insight into the political caliber and trajectory of the leadership that produced them.

The Australian SWP leadership has concluded that those who continued to act as communists in the late 1920s and afterwards, in face of the abandonment of revolutionary internationalism by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Stalin-dominated Communist International, were wrong. According to this view, they should have accommodated themselves to Stalinism, since the course pursued by the Stalin-led Comintern and many of its parties was, with whatever errors, revolutionary. Those communists who refused to go along were, and still are, they say, obstacles, and need to be gotten out of the way.

The Australian SWP leadership also endorses the gangster murder methods that Stalin and his followers around the world used and sought to legitimize in the working-class and national liberation movements.

Speaking of the situation in southern Vietnam in September 1945, the pamphlet states:

During this extremely perilous period for the revolution, the Saigon Trotskyists appear to have outdone themselves in pursuing a sectarian, ultraleft line that would have prevented any real struggle against the imperialist enemy. . . .

As a result of the ultraleftism and excesses that the Communist Party tried but was unable to prevent, the returning French forces and their British allies made extremely serious inroads in the South. . . . It was at this time that leaders of the Trotskyists and of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists were executed. According to most sources, the executions were ordered by [Communist Party leader] Tran Van Giau.

The Trotskyists and their nationalist allies had made a major contribution to the near-destruction of the revolution in the South. Preventing further damage, if necessary by physical repression, was imperative. It appears, however, that the Communist Party felt that Giau had used excessive violence in coping with the situation.

The leaders of the Australian SWP thus try to justify the murder of revolutionists — a crime against the revolution *that can have no justification*, and that the Vietnamese Communist Party itself has never subsequently sought to defend.

Moreover, the Australian SWP leaders endorse the course of action that led to these political assassinations. Their pamphlet defends the Stalinist course that resulted in the reimposition of French colonial rule on southern Vietnam during the final months of 1945 and opened the door to French reconquest of the rest of the country the following year.

Echoing the line of the Stalinist movement at the time, the pamphlet of the Australian SWP leadership states: "The non-Communist [proindependence] forces didn't understand the importance of neutralising the British (who had their own chestnuts to pull out of the fire in India), with the result that British troops became the main lever assisting the return of the French."

"Neutralizing" British imperialism! The Australian SWP leaders don't explain how this miraculous feat was to have been accomplished. The British troops who occupied southern Vietnam at the end of World War II were there for the purpose of aiding the French in reestablishing colonial rule. The fact that British imperialism was fighting to hold onto its own colonial possessions in India and Malaya made it more determined, not less so, to crush successful colonial rebellions anywhere in Asia, and to fight to reimpose the colonial system everywhere possible.

This Stalinist line of argument is repeated in *The North Star* version. It states:

The revolutionary regime's situation was even more hazardous in the south, where the VCP had been decimated by French repression in 1940. Saigon was in effect governed by a "Committee of the South" in which, by early September, the Viet Minh were reduced to a minority. The petty-bourgeois nationalists and Trotskyists who influenced the Committee followed an ultraleft policy leading to armed conflict with the British forces — without troubling themselves about where they would obtain weapons, let alone considering whether it was wise to force Britain into a fight in defense of the interests of French imperialism. This ultraleft line resulted in the loss of Saigon within a few weeks.

The "ultraleft line" of the Vietnamese supporters of the Fourth International and other independence forces "resulted in the loss of Saigon"! How else can we explain that the well-intentioned British occupation army was "forced" into "defense of the interests of French imperialism," instead of being "neutralized"? The account presented by the Australian SWP leaders is a complete frame-up

and a fraud.

Let's look at what actually happened in Vietnam in 1945. What was the dispute all about that led to the Stalinist murders of Vietnamese Fourth Internationalists and other independence fighters?

French colonial rule

First we should establish the historical background.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the French government imposed colonial rule on the peoples of Indochina. Movements and revolts against this tyrannical oppression broke out from the beginning. The independence struggle was impelled forward by the Russian revolution of 1905, the Chinese revolution of 1911, and, especially, the victorious Bolshevik-led revolution in Russia in October 1917. The new Communist International under Lenin's leadership was committed to forging a fighting alliance between the new Soviet state, the workers and peasants of the world, and all oppressed nations struggling for liberation from imperialist domination.

By the late 1920s, the political leadership of the independence movement was increasingly being taken by young Vietnamese fighters who considered themselves communists. Many were members of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP). By the early 1930s, other Vietnamese independence fighters had been won to the efforts led by Soviet Communist leader Leon Trotsky to continue applying Leninist policies in face of abandonment of a revolutionary internationalist course by the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern and its national sections, including the Indochinese Communist Party.

Despite their various political weaknesses and differences, all of these Vietnamese organizations — until the mid-1930s — placed the fight for Vietnam's independence from France at the center of their political line of march. On that basis, "The Struggle" (Tranh Dau) group led by Ta Thu Thau — which was later recognized (in 1939) as the Vietnamese section of the Fourth International — worked closely with the Indochinese Communist Party in southern Vietnam from early 1933 through mid-1937. For nearly four years they jointly published a French-language newspaper called *La Lutte* ("The Struggle," from which the Fourth International group took its name) and fielded common slates in elections for the municipal council in Saigon.

Political developments in the world Stalinist movement in the mid-1930s, however, began to push the Indochinese Communist Party off the rails of the fight for Vietnam's indepen-

dence from France.

In May 1935 the Soviet government signed a mutual security pact with the French government and began seeking an alliance against Germany with U.S. and British imperialism, as well. While there was nothing new about the Soviet government seeking to take political advantage of rifts among rival imperialist powers, diplomacy under Stalin was accompanied by a reversal of the revolutionary internationalist course of the Communist International during the period of Lenin's leadership.

Beginning in the mid-1920s, leaders of the Soviet government and CP insisted that Communist parties subordinate the struggle by workers and farmers in their own countries to whatever was needed at the moment to advance Moscow's diplomatic goals. Meetings of the Communist International and its leadership bodies were transformed from revolutionary political gatherings into what amounted to orientation sessions; representatives of CPs were informed of the latest turn in Moscow's foreign policy and presented with guidelines for how that should determine their activity and stance toward the ruling-class parties and government back home.

The new course signaled by the French-Soviet pact was given a Stalinist "theoretical" veneer at the Seventh Comintern Congress in July-August 1935. The congress called for the formation of "popular fronts" with bourgeois parties in France, Britain, the United States, and other countries in order to advance the Soviet government's diplomatic aims. This was portrayed as the only road to the defeat of fascism in Europe and Asia.

In the oppressed nations of Asia, Africa, and the Americas, the Comintern insisted that the demand for independence be dropped by the colonial slaves of France, Britain, the United States, Holland, and other imperialist powers now dubbed "democratic" by the Stalin-led Comintern. The oppressed workers and peasants of these countries were now told that their true enemy was German and Japanese imperialism, not the imperialist government that was directly holding them in colonial bondage. They were told to limit their efforts to winning economic and political reforms from their colonial masters.

"The Communists advance to the forefront the struggle for the realization of the right of self-determination of nationalities enslaved by fascist governments," Comintern official Dimitri Manuilsky explained during this period. "The Communists . . . demand of the imperialist governments of the so-called bourgeois-democratic states the immediate drastic improvement in the living standards of the toiling masses in the colonies and the granting of broad democratic rights and liberties to the colonies."

In June 1936 a Popular Front government was formed in France, involving a coalition of the Socialist Party and bourgeois parties, backed by the French Stalinists. This imperialist government, like its predecessor, had no intention of granting independence to Vietnam or any other colonies in the "French

Union." Combined with the pact signed by the French and Soviet governments the previous year, the installation of the new Popular Front coalition led the Comintern and French CP leadership to insist that the Indochinese Communist Party drop its demand for independence from France. This was in the best interests of "proletarian internationalism," it was explained.

This proposal met substantial resistance inside the ICP. Its cadres were Vietnamese independence fighters who had been won to the party by their conviction that the Comintern's record of support to national liberation struggles made the Communist movement a powerful instrument to advance the fight against imperialist oppression in Indochina. The new policy being imposed on them by the Comintern leadership came into head-on conflict with their own aspirations for independence, and those of the Vietnamese toilers.

Nonetheless, the ICP leadership adopted the Comintern position in 1935-36, and subordination of the independence struggle to the Soviet government's class-collaborationist diplomacy became a central axis of the ICP's political line for more than a decade. "At this time the Party should not put forward demands which are too high (independence, parliament, etc.)," ICP leader Ho Chi Minh wrote a couple

of years later, "in order not to fall into the trap set by the Japanese fascists. It ought to confine itself to demanding democratic rights. . . ."

In southern Vietnam, however, this sharp turn away from the fight for independence met especially stiff opposition. As late as December 1936, the Southern Regional Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party rejected the demand of the French CP and the ICP's own Central Committee to break from any further collaboration with the Vietnamese Fourth Internationalists, who steadfastly refused to drop the demand for independence from the center of their activity in the class struggle. Nonetheless, by July 1937 the ICP in the south had broken off collaboration with "The Struggle" group once and for all as a result of sharpening differences around this question.

"The Struggle" group refused to follow the ICP in leaving the camp of the independence forces. Its newspaper ran a front-page article headlined, "The Popular Front of Treason." Because of this agitation, the group's best-known leader, Ta Thu Thau, was jailed in 1937 by the "democratic" Popular Front government of French imperialism, further raising his standing as a leader in the fight for Vietnam's independence. He remained imprisoned for two years.

KEY DATES

1940	September	Japanese government occupies Vietnam, leaves Vichy colonial administration intact
1941	May	Viet Minh established
1944	August	Vichy government falls in France, replaced by Allied government of Gen. Charles DeGaulle
1945	March 9	Japanese topple French colonial administration in Vietnam
	July	Potsdam conference agrees to British and Kuomintang occupation of Vietnam
	August 14	United National Front government established in Saigon
	August 15	Japanese government surrenders to Allied forces in Pacific
	August 19	Viet Minh-led insurrection in Hanoi
	August 22-25	Viet Minh-led Committee of South replaces UNF government in Saigon
	Sept. 2	Democratic Republic of Vietnam proclaimed in Hanoi
	Sept. 12-13	British troops land in Saigon, release and arm French troops interned in south
	Sept. 12	Leaders of "The Struggle" and International Communist League arrested and later murdered; murder of Ta Thu Thau may have been earlier, at the end of August
	Sept. 22-23	French forces, aided by British, overthrow Committee of the South in bloody coup and anti-Vietnamese pogrom
1946	March 6	DRV agrees to accept 25,000 troops under French command in north
	December	French troops launch attacks, driving Viet Minh out of Hanoi and other cities in northern Vietnam
1947		War of resistance launched by Viet Minh to restore independence from France

By the end of the 1930s, "The Struggle" group had established substantial political authority among workers and peasants, especially in Saigon and the surrounding countryside. (Another Vietnamese organization claiming adherence to the Fourth International — the International Communist League [ICL] — also continued to campaign for independence. It unified with "The Struggle" organization in the late 1930s, but the two emerged from World War II as separate organizations again.)

In 1939–40, both "The Struggle" group and the Indochinese Communist Party were hit by very harsh repression by the French colonial administration.

In August 1939, the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed. This diplomatic alliance by the Soviet bureaucracy with German imperialism against the "democratic imperialist" governments was accompanied by a temporary scuttling of the popular front line. The Comintern now gave the go-ahead to renew independence struggles against the French, British, Dutch, and U.S. imperialists. In November 1939 the ICP once again placed the slogan of national independence at the center of its work.

Japanese occupation

In late 1940 the Japanese imperialist army occupied Vietnam. Until early 1945, however, the Japanese forces allowed administration of the colonial government to remain in the hands of French officials loyal to the pro-Nazi Vichy regime in Paris.

In May 1941 the Indochinese Communist Party initiated a national liberation front called the Viet Minh (League for the Independence of Vietnam). It launched an armed struggle to expel both the French and Japanese occupiers and to establish an independent Vietnamese republic. Vietnamese supporters of the Fourth International fought as part of the Viet Minh, especially in southern Vietnam, where they had the most members.

At the time the Viet Minh was founded in May 1941, the German invasion of the Soviet Union was a month away. Washington would enter the world war by the end of that year. The Viet Minh leadership pledged to help advance the war aims of the so-called Allied forces — U.S. and British imperialism, the French imperialist forces opposed to the Vichy regime, the Soviet Union, and the Chiang Kai-shek regime in China. We will soon see the disastrous consequences of this commitment for the Viet Minh's stated aim of achieving national independence.

The August 1945 revolution

By August 1944 the Vichy regime in France had fallen under the onslaught of the joint U.S.-British Allied forces and been replaced by a new imperialist government headed by Gen. Charles DeGaulle. The Allied governments were well on their way to defeating their Japanese rival in the Pacific, as well. Under these conditions, the Japanese forces in Indochina decided to topple the French administration. Beginning on March 9, 1945, Japanese



TA THU THAU

authorities interned French officials and troops. A puppet Vietnamese regime under the figurehead of Emperor Bao Dai was installed.

The Viet Minh took advantage of the weakness of the imperialist forces to consolidate and expand a liberated zone in the northernmost part of the country, near the Chinese border. The Viet Minh and other proindependence forces stepped up activity in central and southern Vietnam as well.

Potsdam Conference

At a July 1945 conference in Potsdam, Germany, the five Allied powers agreed that Chiang Kai-shek's troops would occupy Vietnam north of the 16th parallel, and British troops south of it. This agreement entailed acceptance by the heads of the Allied governments, including Stalin, that Indochina would be returned to French authority, in line with agreements on postwar "spheres of influence" that they had reached at the previous Tehran and Yalta conferences. The Allied High Command ordered the Japanese administration and troops in Indochina to "maintain order" pending the arrival of the Kuomintang army and British imperialist troops.

In line with the policy of the world Stalinist movement to subordinate the independence struggle to Allied military and political objectives, however, the Viet Minh adopted a position in April 1945 urging the Vietnamese people to greet and cooperate with the Allied troops, who were soon expected to land in Vietnam. "At points where the landing takes place," the Viet Minh resolution explained, "we should mobilize the people to welcome them [the Allied troops] and appoint delegates to come into contact with them. On the other hand, local troops should be mobilized for the destruction of the communication and supply lines of the Japanese and, together with the Allied forces, fight the common enemy."

On Aug. 15, 1945, however, the Japanese government surrendered to Allied forces in the

Pacific — before British and Chinese troops had been able to land in Vietnam. The ICP and Viet Minh leadership adopted resolutions recognizing that this created an important opportunity to organize the Vietnamese people to take power and establish national independence. Nonetheless, its policy remained to cooperate with the Allied troops still scheduled to land in Vietnam.

A course toward independence and a commitment to welcome the British and Chinese troops were bound to collide in the weeks ahead. The question that remained unsettled was which of these conflicting courses the ICP and Viet Minh leadership would opt for when the showdown came.

A resolution adopted by the Aug. 13–15, 1945, congress of the Indochinese Communist Party pointed out, "The contradictions between Britain, the United States and France on the one side, and the Soviet Union on the other, might lead the British and Americans to make concessions to the French and allow them to come back to Indochina."

In the face of this situation, the ICP document continued, "Our policy consists in avoiding this conjuncture: to be alone in our resistance to the Allied forces (China, France, Britain, and the United States) which would invade our country and force on us a French or a puppet government going counter to the aspirations of our people."

The ICP's only proposal as to *how* to avoid such an eventuality involved relying on two of the Allied governments that had already placed their stamp of approval on the planned British occupation and restoration of French rule over the Indochinese peoples. The Viet Minh "must win the Soviet Union and the United States over to our cause," the ICP resolution continued, "so that we can oppose French attempts to resume their former position in Indochina and the maneuvers of some Chinese militarists to occupy our country."

The fact that a resolution of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1945 would have to acknowledge the need to "win the Soviet Union" to the cause of Vietnam's independence underlines the criminal scope of the treachery of the Stalin-led Soviet government and Comintern before, during, and after World War II. The illusion that U.S. imperialism could somehow be won to support Vietnam's national independence was quickly shattered by Washington's political and military support for France in the late 1940s.

The Viet Minh subsequently called a congress, on August 16, in the northern liberated zone and established a People's National Liberation Committee headed by Ho Chi Minh. The Viet Minh congress adopted a resolution stating its decision, "To wrest power from the hands of the Japanese and the puppet government before the arrival of Allied troops in Indochina and receive in our capacity as the masters of the country the troops which come to disarm the Japanese." In other words, it reaffirmed the previous decisions to welcome the Chiang Kai-shek and British troops and cooperate with them upon their arrival in Vietnam.

By August 19 a general strike and insurrection in Hanoi placed power in that city in the hands of the Viet Minh. The liberation forces established a provisional government with Ho Chi Minh as president. Emperor Bao Dai soon announced his abdication, as the revolutionary upsurge spread throughout the country.

On September 2, President Ho Chi Minh appeared before a crowd of half a million people in Hanoi to proclaim an independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).

The Committee of the South

How did the August Revolution develop in the southern part of Vietnam? On August 14, the day before the Japanese government's surrender in the Pacific, a coalition of proindependence forces taking the name United National Front (UNF) declared itself to be the government in Saigon. The Japanese army and administrative apparatus remained intact in the city, however. The UNF called for the overthrow of the Japanese-installed Bao Dai government and challenged the authority of its local representatives in Saigon.

The UNF coalition included a spectrum of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist groups and religious sects, as well as "The Struggle" group. The Fourth Internationalist organization soon began publishing a Vietnamese-language daily, and one of its leaders, Phan Van Hum, was a leading spokesperson for the UNF.

The Viet Minh was not a member of the UNF coalition.

On August 22, however, Viet Minh and ICP leader Tran Van Giau met with UNF leaders and urged them to support the establishment of a Viet Minh-led provisional government. The UNF coalition agreed to this proposal, which was backed by "The Struggle" group. The UNF joined the Viet Minh in early September. The new government was called the Committee of the South. (The International Communist League [ICL] — the other Vietnamese organization claiming adherence to the Fourth International — had not participated in the UNF and opposed participation in the Viet Minh-led provisional revolutionary government on the grounds that it included bourgeois forces. This is an example of the ICL's ultraleft political line, in contrast to that of "The Struggle" group. The ICL also maintained a sectarian stance toward the DRV and the Committee of the South.)

On August 25, half a million people marched through the streets of Saigon to celebrate the establishment of the new independent government in southern Vietnam.

Although the new French imperialist government of General DeGaulle did not yet have sufficient troops in the region to occupy Indochina, it nonetheless lost no time in naming Col. Jean Cédile as the new French commissioner for southern Vietnam and parachuting him into Vietnam during the night of August 22–23. In discussions with Cédile, Committee of the South leader Tran Van Giau insisted that relations with the French government could only be established on the basis of recognition

of Vietnam's independence. Cédile replied that French governmental authority had to be reinstated before future relations could be discussed.

Large numbers of Vietnamese workers and peasants recognized that they now had their first chance since colonization to actually win independence. They were correctly convinced that any British occupation force in the south, however, would immediately move to help French imperialism reimpose colonial rule. These Vietnamese patriots did not feel bound by the decisions that had been made at their expense at Yalta and Potsdam, and were ill-disposed to welcome any Allied violation of their right to national independence. Growing numbers wanted to be organized and armed by the Committee of the South for what they knew was coming. During late August and the first two weeks of September, this popular opposition to the impending British landing was increasingly voiced by proindependence organizations in the south.

The pamphlet produced by the leadership of the Australian SWP contends that opposition to the impending British occupation in early September 1945 by proindependence forces constituted ultraleft "excesses" and "provocations." Repeating the Stalinist line of the time, it states that, "The last thing the Vietnamese national liberation struggle needed at this point was a fight with the British troops" — as if that could have been avoided short of surrendering the fight for independence!

September 1945 events in Saigon

Let's take a look at what actually happened in Saigon when the British troops landed on Sept. 12–13, 1945, and at the events of the 10 days leading up to the landing.



French General Philippe Leclerc, Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, and British General Douglas Gracey in Saigon in 1945 prepare to impose French rule in Vietnam.

On September 2, the day the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed in Hanoi, a large proindependence demonstration was organized in Saigon by the Committee of the South. Provocateurs, almost certainly French or pro-French forces, shot and killed a French priest who had a reputation of being pro-Vietnamese, as he came out onto the cathedral steps to greet the demonstration. More shots were fired, killing a number of Vietnamese demonstrators and some French residents of the city.

In the ensuing hours, fights broke out between some reactionary French residents and Vietnamese in the city. Vietnamese police responsible to the Committee of the South rounded up a number of French citizens, who were released a day or so later.

Large numbers of French nationals living in Saigon then demanded that the Japanese occupation forces take stiff repressive measures against Vietnamese proindependence forces.

On September 7, Tran Van Giau, president of the Committee of the South, issued an appeal to the people of Saigon blaming Vietnamese "provocateurs" for the fighting that had developed following the shootings on September 2.

The pamphlet by the Australian leadership repeats this slander: "Riots followed [the September 2 shootings] in which five Frenchmen were killed — precisely the sort of 'incident' required by the British commander in order to justify an armed crackdown on the independence movement." The Australian SWP leadership is simply repeating 40 years later the Stalinist justification for refusing to organize the workers and peasants to resist the impending British and French assault on Vietnam's national independence.

The September 7 appeal by Tran Van Giau continued, "a group of persons have organized a meeting demanding that the population be armed. The Japanese and Allied authorities, informed of this, fear that new and more bloody difficulties will ensue." This was a reference to a meeting that had been called for September 8 by the International Communist League. The purpose of the meeting was to demand that the Committee of the South arm the population of Saigon prior to the landing of the British troops, which was imminent.

Tran Van Giau's appeal concluded, "we call on all to have confidence in us and not let themselves be led by people who betray our country. It is only in this spirit that we can facilitate our relations with the Allied representatives."

The demand that the Saigon population be organized and armed by the Committee of the South in face of the impending British occupation was not dreamed up by a handful of Vietnamese ultralefts. It represented a widely recognized need for national self-defense on the part of tens of thousands of Vietnamese working people who believed that victory was possible, and rejected the idea that independence could be gotten by relying on any imperialist government. For these reasons, they opposed the course being implemented by the Com-



French troops round up Vietnamese independence fighters in Saigon in late 1945.

munist Party and Viet Minh leadership. The events of the next two weeks would demonstrate that this revolutionary political instinct was well-grounded.

As the day of the impending arrival of British troops approached, the south became like a political pressure cooker. The Viet Minh-led Committee of the South declared itself part of an independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam, but it was carrying out a course that subordinated fighting for independence to abiding by the pledge by the world Stalinist movement to implement the Potsdam agreement.

If the ICP and Viet Minh leadership did not break from that course, the bloody reimposition of French rule was a foregone conclusion. If it did reverse course, however, then victory was possible. Organized preparations to resist the British forces would raise the political price that London would have to weigh in deciding whether or not to go through with the landing. Had the troops landed, resisting them from the outset would have deprived them of the military initiative, creating the best conditions to defeat them and block their plans to reimpose French rule. Such a course would also have left the Vietnamese independence forces with the greatest leverage if compromise became necessary. It would have involved the fewest losses and the greatest possible gain — the chance to conquer national independence.

Arrests and murders

Faced both with mounting attacks and threats by reactionary French residents and Japanese forces and with growing popular unrest over the approaching arrival of British occupation troops, the Viet Minh-led Committee of the South decided on September 7 to broaden the base of the government, bringing

in additional proindependence forces who had been part of the United National Front coalition in August. These included representatives of several Vietnamese nationalist and religious groups, as well as "The Struggle" organization leader Pham Van Hum.

On September 12 the first British troops arrived, along with a small contingent of French forces. The following day British Maj. Gen. Douglas Gracey flew into Saigon with additional forces. In anticipation of popular reaction against this unfolding occupation, Tran Van Giu and other CP leaders in Saigon ordered the arrest of the central leaders of both the ICL and "The Struggle" group on September 12, and shut down the ICL headquarters. Those arrested included Pham Van Hum, who had been appointed to the Committee of the South government only a few days earlier.

Sometime over the next few weeks the ICL and "The Struggle" leaders were murdered.

Among those killed was Ta Thu Thau, who had been arrested by Viet Minh forces in south central Vietnam as he was returning from Hanoi to Saigon. (Some sources indicate that this particular arrest, unlike the others, occurred at the end of August.) Ta Thu Thau was tried and acquitted three times by local People's Committees in Quang Ngai province, but subsequently was murdered nonetheless.

What led to these murders?

The Vietnamese Fourth Internationalists had consistently opposed any subordination of the Vietnamese independence struggle to Stalin's diplomatic deals with the "democratic imperialist" regimes of France, Britain, and the United States. That had been their policy from their origins in the early 1930s through to Potsdam. In September 1945, with the British army entering Saigon, they could still not be convinced to reverse that revolutionary course. That is why they were murdered.

The very first actions taken by the British occupation forces upon landing in Saigon are described in the book *Why Viet Nam?* by Archimedes Patti, a top U.S. military intelligence officer who was stationed in Hanoi during late 1945. On their first day in Saigon, the British forces released and armed the French troops (Legionnaires) who had been interned by the Japanese in March 1945. According to Patti, these French troops "knocked down doors and looted Vietnamese and Chinese homes and stores, taking what they wanted and vandalizing what they could not carry. The twenty thousand-odd French residents of Saigon, still furious over the rough treatment they had received after the 2 September disorders, became aggressive as the Legionnaires appeared on the streets and indiscriminately took revenge on any hapless Vietnamese who came their way."

Vietnamese citizens organized to defend themselves against these violent attacks.

According to Patti, "it was not difficult for the colonial-oriented general [Gracey] to decide who was in the right" in the conflicts that erupted in Saigon. "He viewed the situation as anarchical and called for prompt and firm action. Within hours of his landing, Gracey ordered the Japanese to disarm the Vietnamese, dislodge the Provisional Executive Committee [the Committee of the South] from the Governor General's Palace in Saigon, and then announced that the action 'has no political implications.' The French lost no time hoisting the French flag over public buildings and displaying the Tricolor on the military vehicles (American-made)."

All this occurred within 48 hours after the British troops arrived.

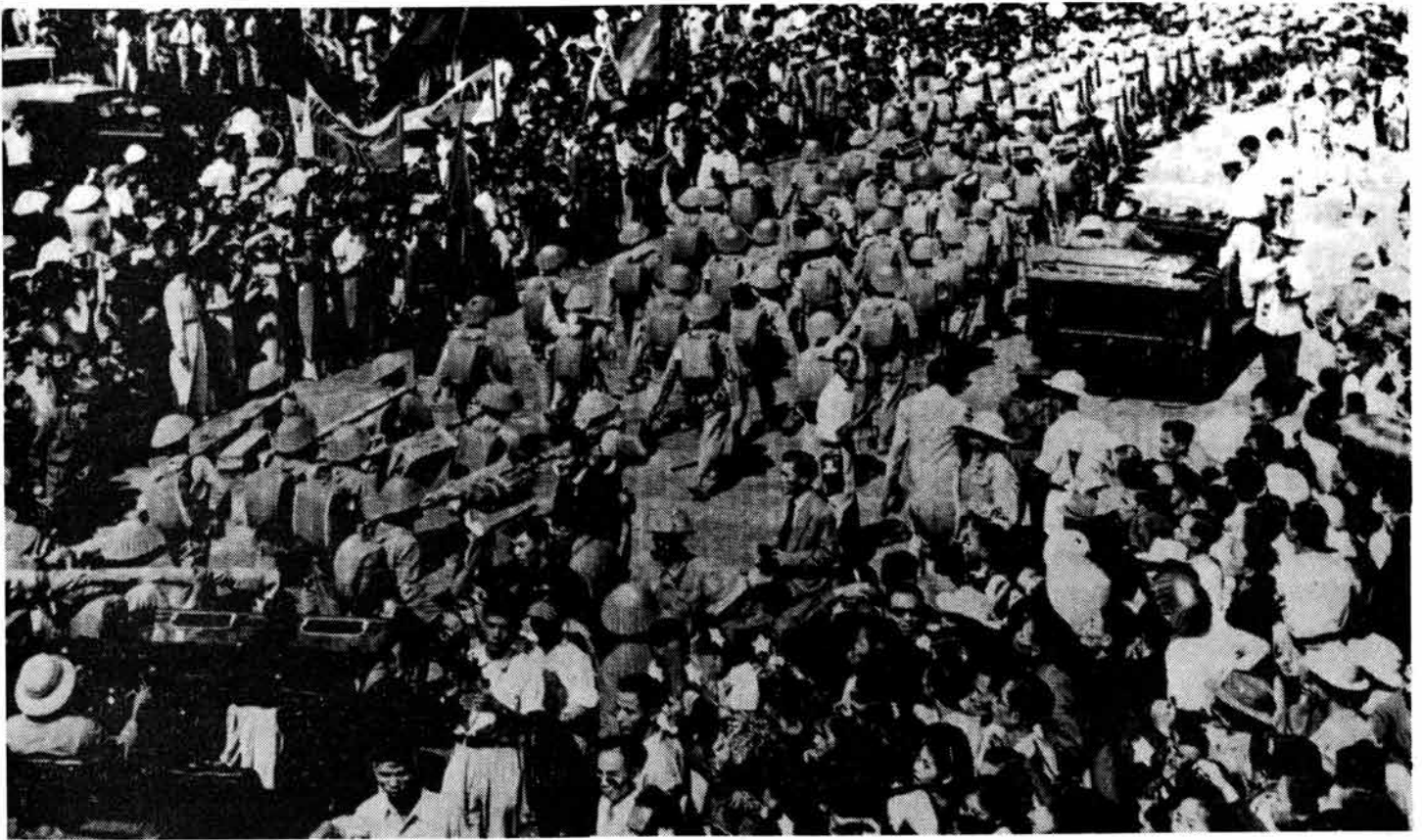
Between September 13 and 16, the new Committee of the South president Pham Van Bach held negotiations with Gracey and French Colonel Cédile. On September 16 Bach publicly condemned these imperialist military officials for their refusal to recognize Vietnam's independence and issued a call for a general strike the next day. In response to this call, Saigon came to a standstill on September 17 and 18.

On September 19, only a week following the entry of the British troops, Colonel Cédile held a news conference to announce that the Committee of the South did not represent the Vietnamese people and had shown itself incapable of preserving order.

On September 20 British General Gracey banned all Vietnamese newspapers. The following day he proclaimed martial law, imposed a curfew, and banned all public gatherings and demonstrations. That same day he ordered the disbanding and disarming of Vietnamese security forces that were under the command of the Committee of the South, and freed additional interned French soldiers, giving them arms.

Archimedes Patti describes the "orgy of French violence" that erupted on September 22-23:

Before dawn and according to plan, Cédile's troops swiftly occupied the remaining police sta-



Viet Minh troops enter liberated Hanoi in 1954. An independent republic was then set up in northern half of Vietnam.

tions, the Treasury, the Sûreté, and the post-telephone-telegraph (PTT) offices. Then, somewhat later in the morning, it was the turn of the City Hall, where the Provisional Executive Committee had sat since Gracey evicted it from the Governor General's Palace. . . . Where they stood guard on the steps of the City Hall, Viet Minh sentries were shot down in cold blood by the French. The few occupants of the building, taken by surprise, put up an ineffectual resistance and they, too, were killed or taken prisoner. All the members of the Provisional Executive Committee except one escaped. But Cédile had retaken the city.

As the curfew ended at 5:30 a.m., people emerged from their homes to see the Tricolor flying from the public buildings and French soldiers standing guard everywhere. . . .

The French who had lived in fear for three weeks rejoiced. Their moment of victory had arrived, so also their moment of revenge. Instantly they reacted as one savage mob on the rampage. Banding in gangs of three, four, six, or even more, French men and women roamed the streets of Saigon in search of Vietnamese. . . . The number of victims was reckoned, even conservatively, in the high hundreds and probably reached into the thousands.

All this took place before the eyes of the French and British military who stood idly by, apparently enjoying the sport.

It is at this point in the September 1945 events that the Australian SWP leaders find their crowning example of the alleged "excesses" and "provocations" that "resulted in the loss of Saigon." Here is what the pamphlet says:

"On September 24" — that is, the day *after*

the bloodsoaked French coup that has just been described — "there were riots in which Vietnamese broke into the European quarter of Saigon and massacred 150 people. General Gracey used this as a pretext for suppressing the nationalist movement in Saigon and driving Viet Minh units out of the suburbs."

Vietnamese patriots in the south rose up to defend themselves and their nation in the days following the French-British coup. It is a political disgrace for those claiming to be communists to describe this heroic resistance as "riots in which Vietnamese broke into the European quarter of Saigon and massacred 150 people." That sounds more like a racist "yellow peril" tale that might have appeared in the pages of some bourgeois scandal sheet rationalizing the Anglo-French rape and pillage.

Over the next weeks, French forces succeeded in spreading their military control over growing areas of southern and central Vietnam. Then, in March 1946, the DRV government in Hanoi signed an accord with the French imperialist regime agreeing to accept the stationing of 15,000 French troops in the north, along with 10,000 Vietnamese troops under French command. Paris announced its recognition of the DRV as a "free state," but not an independent one. It was still to be "part of the Indochina Federation and French Union." The French gave their solemn promise that these units were to remain no longer than 1952, and that a referendum would be held in southern Vietnam on the question of unifica-

tion of the country.

As soon as the French troops were in place, of course, all the other provisions of the March Accords went out the window. By the end of 1946 French troops had driven the Viet Minh from Hanoi and other northern cities.

The opportunity to conquer and consolidate Vietnam's independence that had opened in mid-August 1945 had been lost. This bloody defeat at the hands of French imperialism was the final outcome of the disastrous course that the ICP and Viet Minh leaders had followed from their adoption of the Stalinist Comintern's Popular Front line in the mid-1930s through to the end of World War II.

But some crucial lessons would be drawn in coming years. Never again would the leadership of the Communist Party in Vietnam subordinate the struggle for independence to the class-collaborationist diplomacy of Moscow or, after 1949, Peking. As a result, the full-scale war of resistance that erupted at the beginning of 1947 culminated in a Viet Minh victory over the French at Dienbienphu in 1954 and the reestablishment of an independent Vietnamese republic in the northern half of the country.

Cover-up for Moscow's betrayal

The Australian SWP leadership presents a total whitewash of the treachery by the Stalin-led government of the Soviet Union, and by the French Stalinists, in letting the independence struggle go down to defeat in Vietnam in 1945-46.

Stalin agreed at Potsdam to sanction the postwar occupation of Vietnam by British imperialist and Nationalist Chinese troops, setting the stage for the French reentry. To demonstrate to its imperialist allies its reliability as a force for stability of the international postwar status quo, the Soviet government did not even grant diplomatic recognition to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the 15 months it held power in 1945–46.

In April 1946 French CP leader Maurice Thorez stated that he “ardently hoped to see the French flag flying over every territory in the French Union.” If the Vietnamese did not live up to the March 1946 accords with Paris, vowed Thorez, “we will take the necessary measures, and let guns speak for us if need be.” The French CP daily *L’Humanité* indignantly complained: “Are we [!], having lost Syria and Lebanon yesterday, to lose Indochina tomorrow, and North Africa the day after?”

The French government that launched the colonial war of reconquest of Vietnam in

1946–47 had five CP ministers, including the vice-president and the minister of defense for periods of time. In the French parliament, these ministers in March 1947 voted “in solidarity with the government” in favor of war credits to finance French troops in Indochina.

The Australian SWP leadership slides over these facts. This is not surprising. The twisted account of the events in Vietnam in 1945–46, and the cover-up of the Stalinists’ role in it, reflects the Australian SWP leadership’s own increasing adoption of more and more elements of the political standpoint of world Stalinism.

It is this that completely blinds them to the fact that what made possible Vietnam’s 1954 and 1975 victories over French and U.S. imperialism was the Vietnamese Communist Party’s consistent refusal, following the disastrous defeat of 1945–47, to ever again subordinate the independence struggle to the class-collaborationist course dictated by the foreign policy interests of the privileged castes in Moscow or Peking. This enabled the party to lead the Vietnamese workers and peasants to liber-

ation from imperialist domination, north and south, by 1975.

Far from being a continuation of the line of the Stalinized Comintern in the colonial and semicolonial countries, which the Communist Party of Vietnam did apply — under duress, and with whatever divisions and hesitations — from the late 1930s through the defeat of 1945–47, its course after this time marked a qualitative change in this decisive regard.

The Vietnamese workers and peasants faced enormous odds and suffered staggering human and material losses, first at the hands of the French and then of U.S. imperialist armies. But for more than a quarter of a century, despite setbacks and enforced retreats, the Communist Party of Vietnam led a revolutionary democratic liberation struggle through to the end. They led the Vietnamese people in throwing off imperialist aggression and establishing an independent and unified Vietnam.

And in doing so they struck a blow against imperialism and for working people that transformed the world. □

DOCUMENTS

Australian SWP quits Fourth International

‘Direct Action’ reports on decision of National Committee

By Steve Painter

[The following article appeared in the August 28 issue of *Direct Action*, a weekly newspaper published in Sydney, Australia, that reflects the views of the Australian Socialist Workers Party.]

* * *

SYDNEY — Meeting on August 16–18, the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party voted unanimously to withdraw from the Fourth International, the main international organisation of Trotskyist parties, to which the SWP had been affiliated for about 15 years.

The decision followed a report presented on behalf of the National Executive by Doug Lorimer, one of the party’s delegates to the twelfth world congress of the Fourth International. The congress was held in Europe earlier this year.

The SWP representatives presented two resolutions to the congress: The Cuban Revolution and its Extension, and the Struggle for Socialism in the Imperialist Epoch. (Both are available as books from Resistance Centres. Addresses, page 22.)

Both resolutions were opposed by the two major factions in the International; the majority group based mainly on leaders of the European parties, and a minority consisting of followers of the United States Socialist Workers Party.

An obstacle

The experience of the congress, said Lorimer, had convinced the Australian delegates that the Fourth International’s “very existence is an obstacle to the revolutionaries who are in it participating fully in the process of building a new international revolutionary movement — one with mass influence.

“It is counterposed,” he added, “to the mass international revolutionary movement that already does exist and that is developing, particularly in Latin America.”

As with previous world congresses at which SWP delegates had been present, a considerable amount of time was taken up with organisational disputes, said Lorimer. And the political discussion at times had little point.

Fortunately, said Lorimer, the world congress was not a reflection of the daily functioning of many parties in the Fourth International: “More and more comrades are less and less interested in the interminable discussion of what appears to them as very abstract programmatic issues and the organisational wrangling that has tended to dominate the political life of the international.

“They are interested in general programmatic debates only insofar as they have relevance to the practical political work of party building.”

Incessant factionalism

“But the domination of discussion by rarefied theoretical questions, and the incessant factionalism, are inevitable products of

the way the Fourth International came into existence — as an international organisation based on small propaganda groups united around a precise program, strategy and tactics, rather than around big mass struggles.

“The tendency to elevate written programmatic positions above practical activity in the class struggle continues to dominate the thinking and approach of the Fourth International leadership.

“This could be seen in the majority’s approach to the Central American revolutions and the question of building a mass international revolutionary movement.”

The congress report on Central America, said Lorimer, contained little “that we would have substantial disagreement with.” But it left out the role of Cuba: The example Cuba and its Marxist-Leninist leadership sets for anti-imperialist fighters throughout the world. “It was clear that the majority at the congress wanted to avoid the Cuba question.

“The report made only one brief reference to the Cuban leadership. It noted that the leaderships in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Cuba represented the overcoming of the crisis of revolutionary leadership in that area.

“This attitude demonstrates the most glaring problem with the outlook and approach of the Fourth International majority. Here we have a congress of a small international revolutionary organisation — an organisation whose proclaimed goal is to help overcome the crisis of revolutionary leadership, and to make revolutions.

"And on the other hand, we have the over-coming of the crisis of leadership in a part of the world in which revolutionary developments are having tremendous repercussions on Latin American and world politics. But what do these momentous developments mean for the role of the Fourth International? Apparently, very little at all."

Discussing the congress in the June 17 *International Viewpoint*, Daniel Bensaïd, a leader of the Fourth International, said: "In a way the Nicaraguan revolution represents a challenge for us. It is a revolution made by others, and at the beginning we understood it badly."*

Why did the Fourth International understand the Nicaraguan revolution "badly," asked Lorimer. Couldn't the reason be that it had a wrong policy? The problem certainly wasn't lack of information, as there were supporters of the international in Nicaragua almost from the beginning.

"How does the Fourth International propose to respond," to revolutionary developments in Central and Latin America? "They say they must 'participate fully in these processes,' but at the same time 'keep our sights on the need for the Fourth International' and the need to defend its program, since this has supposedly been proved right — though not by the Fourth International leading revolutions, but by other people doing this with a different program.

"The comrades refuse to see that by continuing to keep their sights on building an international organisation on a program that is different from those of the people who have made revolutions they are blocking any possibility of participating fully in the process of building new parties in Latin America and elsewhere."

Bensaïd described the Fourth International as "a historic current that preserves one little thing in particular, an international view of revolution, and which from its origins has represented an alternative view of Stalinism."

"But," said Lorimer, "the international revolutionary movement that the Cuban Communist Party and the Nicaraguan FSLN represent has done far more than 'preserve an international view.' It has promoted the actual international extension of the revolution. It has presented an alternative to Stalinism in practice. The failure of the Fourth International majority to see this shows that for it, words are more important than deeds.

"We think organisations like the Cuban Communist Party, the FSLN, El Salvador's FMLN, and the Vietnamese Communist Party are dealing with present political developments most dynamically and creatively. There is no need to build a political current separate and distinct from them," added Doug Lorimer.

"If the revolutionary cadres who constitute the Fourth International are really going to participate in the process of building new mass parties and a new mass revolutionary international movement, they must break with the idea that having an alternative view of Stalinism justifies being in a separate 'historic

current.'"

Politically narrow

"New mass revolutionary parties will not be built through the Fourth International," said Lorimer. "This is not only because it is too small, but because it is too politically narrow. It is built around a program containing key elements that have been repeatedly proven wrong by the revolutionary victories that have occurred this century."

The Socialist Workers Party "could continue to argue for our views within the framework of the Fourth International," Lorimer added, "but we don't think this would be of much value. If the shock of the Nicaraguan Revolution is not enough to cause the Fourth International majority to reconsider its fundamental course, no amount of argument on our part will change it."

Leaving the Fourth International does not reflect a turn away from internationalism, said Lorimer, "in fact, we are turning towards a more real internationalism.

"Our conception of internationalism involves developing international collaboration. It involves comradesly exchanges of views and experiences, based on a willingness to learn from others while thinking for ourselves."

While the SWP has ended its participation in the Fourth International, added Lorimer, "we want to have relations with anyone who is prepared to exchange views and experiences with us, including parties remaining in the Fourth International."

Discussing Doug Lorimer's report, SWP national secretary Jim Percy commented: "In the end, our political position is a total negation of the whole reason for the existence of the Fourth International.

"Consider the impact of the Nicaraguan Revolution on the Fourth International: It forced the key leaders of the Fourth International today to distort Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution."

In the discussion at the world congress, leaders of the international majority faction claimed that Trotsky accepted the need for two stage revolutions in colonial countries.

In fact, beginning in 1905, Trotsky argued that there was only one stage — the socialist stage. Lenin pointed out that revolutions in the colonial world must first pass through a democratic stage.

"Because the leaders of the Fourth International want to respond genuinely to the Nicaraguan Revolution, they have to distort Trotsky's theory very much, to say it's no different to Lenin's view. Okay, we could say that's optimistic. Who cares what we call it? Call it Trotsky's theory, or Lenin's theory, what's in a name.

"But there's another problem. The problem of where the thinking stops. It stops at the borders of Nicaragua. It can't cross the Caribbean to Cuba.

"The reason it can't get to Cuba is not because of Cuba. What they're really worried about is the Soviet Union. The Trotskyist view of Stalinism stands in the way of understand-

ing the importance of what is happening in Cuba.

"There are other problems too. Trotskyist politics leads to the most terrible organisational mess, rottenness, blunders. The crisis in the Fourth International will continue. The present bloc between the European and United States factions is quite cynical. It will probably fly apart.

"But there are revolutionists in the Fourth International, and there are revolutionary organisations in it.

"We must have a certain modesty about what we are doing," added Jim Percy. "Leaving the Fourth International in itself solves nothing for us, it merely removes an obstacle to our development of relations with other revolutionary forces. It certainly doesn't present us with any magical, overnight solutions to the problems we face in trying to build a revolutionary party.

"Saying the Fourth International is an obstacle doesn't mean that all of its parties are also. There's nothing better than the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire in France, or the Socialist Party in Sweden, or the Revolutionary Workers Party in Mexico. But insofar as they think the Fourth International is real, they miseducate their comrades. They don't provide a revolutionary perspective that allows them to see the real development of the world situation."

Vietnam, Cuba

"In the end we're leaving for a combination of political and organisational reasons. I think it was wrong to form the Fourth International in the first place, although we're not voting on that.

"In the end the organisational form cut off Trotsky and the Trotskyists from any other possibility of development of the Communist movement. And some parties, as we know now, for instance the Vietnamese Communist Party, did develop in a revolutionary direction, made revolutions.

"It was wrong in the 1960s, with the Cuban Revolution, not to fundamentally reorient the Fourth International then.

"Then there was the Vietnamese Revolution. If we hadn't had these blinkers about Stalinism, that massive struggle (which the Fourth International did a great deal of work to defend), should have been enough to make us understand that a Communist party doesn't go through that unless there's something good about it," said Jim Percy.

"This is not a cavalier decision," he added. "Over 15 or so years we've devoted a lot of resources to trying to strengthen the international centre, to traveling to Fourth International functions, to collaborating with other parties in the international.

"Later, we put a lot of energy into trying to convince others of our views. Now, we have other things to do. It would be quite irresponsible not to take this step."

The full text of Doug Lorimer's report will be available from Resistance Centres in a few weeks. □

*This interview also appeared in the August 5 issue of *Intercontinental Press*. — IP

Evolution of Percy-Camejo current

1983 report traces deepening divergence from Fourth International

By Larry Seigle

[The following information report was presented to the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States on Aug. 9, 1983. The text is taken from the Information Bulletin of the U.S. SWP, where it appeared in October 1984. The SWP publications it quotes are available for purchase from the SWP, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014.]

* * *

At present we are witnessing a political convergence between Pedro Camejo [a former member of the U.S. SWP] and the leadership of the Australian section of the Fourth International. Comrades in our party were surprised to read last December in *Direct Action*, the newspaper of the Australian Socialist Workers Party, that Camejo was to be a featured speaker at the Australian SWP's forthcoming convention. As it turned out, Camejo's visit was postponed until April this year, when he toured the country for the Australian SWP speaking on, among other things, "The Coming American Revolution." This tour took place almost two years after Camejo walked out of our party.

This report is on the agenda here in response to the request from Jim Percy and Doug Lorimer, two leaders of the Australian SWP, and from Camejo for support to their resolution on the Cuban revolution, which you have all received copies of in advance of this meeting. This resolution is being submitted to the next World Congress of the Fourth International, and these three comrades have asked for additional signers.

To evaluate the proposal that we sign up with this newly formed Camejo-Percy international current, we have to look at this political convergence between Camejo and the Australian SWP leadership a little more broadly.

On both sides it starts from the rejection of the turn to industry and the perspectives that the SWP has adopted and that were adopted by the Fourth International at the 1979 World Congress. What we are seeing is an illustration of how far and how quickly you get off course when you turn your back on this perspective and start searching for another. It's an illustration of what happens to groups and currents like this when they reject the perspective of building proletarian revolutionary parties and start looking for political alternatives and shortcuts.

Where this leads, in the case of Camejo at least, is already clear. It ends with turning one's back on the Fourth International. This is also the danger in the case of the Australian SWP. The danger here is that this current is on its way out of the Fourth International.

This is a convergence of people who came out of the student radical tradition in the period of the 1960s and early 1970s and who, under changed political conditions, are trying to re-create a caricature — not the reality, but a caricature — of where they came from.

We know pretty well what the Camejo party looks like in this country. We already see it taking shape.

Camejo's followers are quitting the party, following in his footsteps. The recent resignation letter from Ackerman tells you a lot. It is flamboyantly dated "July 19, 1983 — 4th Anniversary of the Nicaraguan Revolution; July — the month of celebrations of the revolutions of the Americas." And what does he do to honor these dates? He quits the party!

Another letter of resignation, this one from Thiebaud, also gives you a picture of the Camejo current. Thiebaud claims that "a recent discussion with the visiting FSLN representative reconvinced me of the urgency of the Central American situation. Evaluating my limited economic and personal resources I have concluded that I prefer to fully devote my energies to defending the Central American revolution and building a United front against U.S. intervention. I also intend to become a shop steward again in my [nurses'] union." What being a shop steward has to do with "defending the Central American revolutions" Thiebaud doesn't say. Nor does she explain why quitting the revolutionary party in the United States aids the cause of Central America. But you get the drift.

We can also get an idea of what this Camejo party will look like from the interviews with Camejo that were published by the Australian comrades and reprinted in *Intercontinental Press*. [See *IP*, July 25, 1983.] That tells us that the Camejo organization here will be the bilateral nuclear freeze — initiative and referendum first — make your own clothes — religion is progressive — jogging is revolutionary — hate the garment turn — hate the turn in general — hate the party and move back to Berkeley — club.

Evolution of the Australian SWP

However, while we are familiar with Camejo's political degeneration, many comrades have not had a chance to follow closely the increasingly rapid political and organizational evolution of the Australian SWP. Only some comrades are able to keep up with the publications of the Australian SWP. Because of the distances, we only rarely get to send comrades to Australia, and it is even more rare for Australian comrades to be able to come through here, visiting branches and meeting comrades across the country. Much of what I

will report, therefore, is new to most of us.

Over the years we have had some disagreements with the leadership of the Australian section. We had a disagreement over Afghanistan, where most of us thought they were wrong. The Australian leadership's response was to publish an entire thick book consisting of their polemic with us. It seemed to us that the Australian SWP leadership was more interested in establishing themselves as "independent thinkers" than in objectively looking at the developments and the discussion around Afghanistan. But that was fine. We have a disagreement.

Then, comrades will recall, there was a rather sharp difference of line around the imposition of martial law in Poland at the end of 1981 and the ways in which we responded. The Australian section participated in demonstrations in immediate reaction to the crackdown on Solidarity, some of which seemed very similar to the one that took place in San Francisco, which united a few "progressive" forces with outright reactionaries and openly anticommunist groups such as "Captive Nations" supporters and others of that kind.

I'll quote from a minority report by Nita Keig presented to the Australian section's National Committee meeting and published in their discussion bulletin [Vol. 10, No. 4, October 1982] to give a description of these actions.

I want to add some more things about our pickets. I don't think they were fundamentally different from the San Francisco picket in which the US SWP branch participated and later made a self-criticism. Were the slogans, the political basis, any more left wing? If anything, San Francisco may have had the edge on us. Was the composition much different? We also solicited and gained the participation of third campist elements such as the International Socialists. According to the report in *Direct Action*, in some cities they even had more speakers than ourselves on the platform. Right-wingers also showed up in some cities with their placards. In Adelaide we had to fight to keep them off the platform. I've got a photograph here of the Sydney picket. It comes from *Australasian Spartacist* but could as easily have been taken by the bourgeois media. It shows one of our party banners and several of our members standing next to placards which read "Down with Red Fascism in Poland," "Polish children die because of Communist Regime," and "Help Freedom in Poland."

We thought, after reading the *Direct Action* coverage, that the Australian comrades might begin to realize the problems with these types of actions and recognize they'd made an error. This wasn't unusual. Our party had to go through the process of thinking out how to respond to these events, and we had a few false starts ourselves. And, of course, the Australian

SWP's line on Polish Solidarity was totally inconsistent with its line on Afghanistan. It was off in the other direction.

But there was no correction on Poland. Instead there was a reaffirmation, a deepening and a justification of that error to the point where, a year later, the section had to initiate more demonstrations of exactly the same character, in order to prove that it had been the right thing to do in the first place.

The first thing that gave some comrades pause for serious thought was the article from Australia in the February 28, 1983, issue of *Intercontinental Press* on the convention of the Australian SWP. It began by reporting, "Since the SWP took the decision several years ago to base itself in the industrial working class, the overwhelming majority of its members *have been* [emphasis added] industrial workers." That interesting choice of verb tense makes you pause for a moment. The article goes on to describe the major change that took place at the convention:

Much discussion at the conference centered on new work for the party that opened up in the trade unions after the party reassessed its view of this work last year.

Whereas in the past the party held the view that revolutionaries should seek to take leadership positions in the trade unions only after a significant rise in the consciousness of workers, in September of last year the party leadership decided that this view had been incorrect and that revolutionaries should participate actively in the trade unions, up to and including struggles for control of the union apparatus itself.

Later in this report we'll come back to what we think this means. Further down in the article we read:

One of the highlights of the conference was to have been three talks by Pedro Camejo, a fraternal member of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International. However, Camejo was prevented from attending the conference by the Australian immigration authorities, who delayed granting him a visa until it was too late for him to fulfill his speaking commitments.

The conference decided to campaign against this undemocratic exclusion and, if possible, tour Camejo later this year.

A common reaction among many comrades here when they read that was, "Well, we don't know too much about the evolution of the Australian SWP, but we do know a lot about Camejo and his trajectory. There has to be something wrong when you invite Camejo, of all people, to present what's happening in the United States." Again, we'll return to what's behind these differences.

The evolution of the Australian section is a serious question for us to face up to, as well as for the entire leadership of the Fourth International.

A prior experience in the Fourth International

It is similar in some ways to the situation that we faced with the degeneration of Healy's party in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹ I stress these dates, because we are not

1. Gerry Healy, leader of the British section of the

talking about what the Healyites have become today, an organization that is run by enemies of the workers' movement. That is what most of us in this room have had experience with. But before the Healyites became what they are today, there was a political trajectory with similarities to the course being followed by the leadership of the Australian SWP. It is not the same, but there are similarities that can help us understand what is happening to the Australian SWP leadership.

One of these is the ultrasectarian stance towards the British Labour Party that the Healyites developed, counterposing themselves, not just as a current with a revolutionary alternative line to the class-collaborationist leadership of the Labour Party, but as an organizational alternative.

Another similarity is the adoption of more and more erratic positions. You leap to a position without thinking it through. Then you arch out in another direction. Every position taken gets absolutely frozen and defended — no matter what. They aren't subject to change because, regardless of being right or wrong, they were not objectively motivated. They were not arrived at through an objective consideration of how to advance the movement or the working-class struggle. They were positions derived to serve other ends, factional ends within the Fourth International, and within the party.

The corollary of that is that you can never admit a mistake. You can never admit a mistake and correct it since if you do somebody — on the left in general, in the Fourth International, or inside the party — is going to "take advantage" of it. So you defend every position.

You also get a little whiff from the leadership of the Australian party of what became much more accentuated in Healy's organization later, the organizational "toughness." The Healyites didn't begin with physical violence. They started with tough, political-gangster tactics.

This was combined with increasingly trying to insulate their membership from contact with other sections, other countries, other political currents. If people wanted to travel abroad, cross the Channel, Healy would ask, "Why do you have to do that?" Members were even intimidated from having contact with each other. That kind of development began.

In addition, the leadership became preoccupied with maneuvering in the International, primarily against the leadership of our party. Healy became obsessed with rejecting what he felt had been "living in the shadow of the SWP," and with publicly demonstrating his independence from it. Like everybody who becomes fixated on maneuvering others, you're always projecting that this is what is being done to you. (Camejo's reaction to the publica-

Fourth International in the 1950s and early 1960s, refused to participate in the reunification of the Fourth International in 1963. He now heads the Workers Revolutionary Party, an anti-working-class formation.

tion of the two interviews with him in *IP*, interviews carefully prepared and published in Australia, is another example of this. He asked a comrade, "Why did *IP* run those interviews? You're *maneuvering* me." He has become one of those people who think that by publishing their own carefully chosen words you are trying to frame them up on something.)

In the spring of 1961 Jim Cannon wrote some letters on the political degeneration of the Healy party in Britain. These were printed in the discussion bulletin [See *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 22, No. 17.] Cannon wrote:

In my opinion, Gerry [Healy] is heading toward disaster and taking his whole organization with him. The position they have taken on Cuba is much worse than a political mistake. Their approach to the question is not revolutionary, but scholastic, as is the case also with the position of our own minority. And what is worse, if that is possible, it is not objectively motivated.

Later, he continued,

The trouble with taking a false position on great questions in order to serve some factional local or national momentary interest, real or imagined, is not only that it eventually weakens the authority of the leaders who play this self-defeating game. Another result is that whole cadres become miseducated and disoriented while the sly factional game is being played, and they are unable to turn around when the leaders recognize the consequences of their own folly, if they do.

From reading the *Newsletter* in the recent period, I get the definite impression that the SLL is off on an Oehlerite binge.² This can lead to an impatient demand from the ranks for the Trotskyist cadre in Great Britain to cut loose from the Labour Party and its left wing, and to form an independent Trotskyist party and be done with it. I cannot imagine a better way to put the Trotskyist cadres in Great Britain in a corner.

This is exactly the way the Healyites went, and it was later that year at the SWP convention that Cannon explained that we now had to face up to the fact that the leadership of that organization was destroying the British party.

There is a parallel with the situation that is now facing the comrades in the Australian SWP. The current leadership of that party is taking the organization along the road to rapid political destruction as a revolutionary party. It is on a trajectory that will take it out of the Fourth International.

The Camejoites in the United States are on a similar course, headed away from revolutionary working-class politics and away from the Fourth International.

Rejection of turn to industrial unions

I said earlier that the convergence between Camejo and the Australian SWP leadership begins with a rejection of the turn to the industrial unions that was decided on at the 1979 World Congress. That's exactly where the whole thing starts. The first expression of this in Australia that anyone here has seen was in a report

2. Hugo Oehler led an ultraleft grouping in the Workers Party (predecessor of the U.S. SWP) that opposed the entry of the party into the Socialist Party in 1935.

published in December 1982. It is a report by Jim Percy entitled, "Further Steps in Proletarianizing the Party." It was presented to the National Committee of the Australian SWP in July 1982. [Published in the Australian SWP publication *Socialist Worker*, Vol. 2, No. 3, December 1982.]

In this report, Comrade Percy declares that the turn "is behind us." He begins the report by stating that the "percentage of comrades in industry, or who are looking for industrial jobs, or who are on fulltime is 81 percent of our full and provisional membership."

Included in the category of "industrial jobs" are some that we would not define as basic industry. For example, the Australian SWP's largest union fraction is made up of ticket collectors in public transport. This is not basic industry. This doesn't entail a moral judgment — it is simply a fact. We have built temporary fractions in areas such as transit when we have suffered layoffs in auto or steel, or when it was useful as a stepping stone to better placed jobs. However, that didn't lead us to revise our definition of basic industry. We didn't try to deceive ourselves about how far we had to go in continuing to deepen our industrial turn, or the scale of the difficulties and political challenges still before us.

Percy reports that 23 percent of the membership of the organization is on full-time or attending the party school. This is a huge bloated apparatus for any party.

The report also says that 44 percent of the National Committee is in industry or looking for industrial jobs.

There's nothing wrong with these figures per se. They may indicate real progress. But to conclude from these figures that it is time to declare the turn completed and "behind us" is to retreat from this perspective. It can result only in a complete reversal of the line adopted by the 1979 World Congress.

This turnaround is not done openly by the Australian SWP leadership as a change of

course and a break from the line of the 1979 World Congress. Instead, it is justified in Percy's report by quoting a paragraph from the 1979 World Congress report on the turn, a paragraph ripped out of the political context of the report as a whole.

This paragraph reads:

The more successful we have been in drawing the lessons and implementing the resolution, the quicker the turn *per se* will be behind us. The turn is a radical tactical move necessitated by the historical development of our movement and the current stage of world politics. It is an abnormal response to an abnormal situation — a situation in which the big majority of our members in every section have *not* been industrial workers. Once this historically necessary tactic has been carried out — once the abnormal situation of our current social composition and arena of work has been changed — the turn will be behind us. If it is carried out to the end, the tactic ceases. [See "The Turn to Industry and the Tasks of the Fourth International," by Jack Barnes, published in special supplement to *Intercontinental Press* containing the resolutions and reports from the 1979 World Congress. Available for \$1.00 plus postage from SWP, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014.]

After quoting this, Percy continues, "Well, I think in that sense, there is no doubt at all, that for our party the turn is behind us." Later in the same report he refers to the high level of activity of the membership and explains, "That's one of the reasons why the turn for us, all things considered, was comparatively easy."

I asked some questions about the turn in Australia of the comrades from the Melbourne branch who are here at the educational conference. The Melbourne branch comprises about a third of the Australian SWP's total membership. In that branch there are some 65 full and provisional members. Four are full-time organizers for either the party or the youth organization, nine are students, 10 are unemployed, three are retired, and 37 are in union fractions.

The breakdown of the union fractions is as follows: three in rail, three in what we would

call auto plants, and 12 ticket collectors on trams. In addition there are 19 comrades in a "general fraction" which includes everyone who is in a union but not in one of the previous fractions, such as white collar workers, nurses, teachers, plus several machinists, and so on.

This is not what we would call the end of the turn.

Then, further in this same report, Comrade Percy explains some organizational conclusions that the leadership derives from declaring that the turn is at an end.

He explains that "completion of the turn makes it possible to experiment, and makes our discussion new in that we are dealing with a very changed party. So I want to look at some of these questions and pose some organizational moves."

Erosion of membership decision-making

Is there a way, Percy proceeds to ask, of "eliminating some aspects of our formal democratic functioning, the *formalism* of our democratic functioning, and putting more *real content* into the democratic functioning of the party, and therefore allowing a greater centralization, a greater efficiency of the party?"

The main proposal is to no longer have weekly branch meetings, but to hold them only once every month. This is projected as a way of increasing the democracy of the organization, since branch meetings were allegedly too dull and there was not much active participation. "Often the executive committee has in fact over-prepared the branch meeting, leached the life out of the branch meeting itself." But the solution being proposed by Percy is for *less* political responsibility and decision-making powers for the branches.

This reduction in the participation of the membership in political decision making is presented as "an elevation of the political importance of branch meetings, making the political life more relevant in the branch meetings. That would increase the potential centralisation of the party, because in a way it would give the branch executive committee more authority, both formal and real."

Percy contrasts branch meetings with meetings of the Political Committee. "It has a much more flexible procedure. I don't think we have ever had time limits in the Political Committee. So in reality, the way the Political Committee functions is as the most democratic organ of the party, more democratic than the National Committee, because we are forced to have time limits at the National Committee meetings. Obviously, the party would have a much, much bigger problem if the Political Committee was leached of political life than if one branch was, but it is a useful comparison." I leave aside the fact that this is an odd view of party democracy. Is democracy really less critical for the branches than for the Political Committee: What does such a statement imply about the relationship between the leadership and the membership?

There is another organizational innovation, which we recently found out about quite by accident: the Australian section's Political Com-

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mittee keeps no minutes for the information of the National Committee. NC members have no regular way of being informed of the proposals, decisions, or actions of their subcommittee, the Political Committee. We discovered this because we thought that the SWP Political Committee had somehow been dropped off the list for receiving PC minutes from Australia, since we hadn't been receiving them. When we wrote to inquire, we learned that there *are no minutes* — at least none that are sent out.

The decision to reduce the frequency of branch membership meetings is explained as a proposal "designed to alleviate the problems of industrial workers joining the party."

"The point is," Percy explains,

it's going to take quite a time to train those sorts of workers [that is, workers recruited out of industry] and it may take other political conditions, too, to finish the process. That's not to say they are inactive, that they should not be members at all. They *should* be members, but, in a sense, it is a *provisional* process.

He continues:

Over a period we will win and convince, train and educate those workers into full participation in party life. As their political consciousness rises, they put the party first more and more. But that is not a process of three months, and not even of one year, but of several years of persistent work.

What is laid out here is a blueprint for an organization with two classes of membership — the central leadership and active cadre on the one hand, and a layer of passive, worker half-members on the other. The implication is that industrial workers are slow to learn, and less interested in participating in the political life and decision-making of the party. It's a typically petty-bourgeois view of the capacities of workers who see the need to build a revolutionary workers' party and who want to become involved to the fullest extent possible in the political life of the organization they've chosen to join.

There is another aspect of this two-tier membership concept that should be noted. It is not only comrades who are industrial workers who suffer from a lack of democracy in such a situation, but also many other members who are not part of the executive committee, but upon whom a large burden of activity often falls. For example, we read later in the report that "the process of not organising [paper sales] through the branch meeting once a week won't affect the active sellers, who are self-motivating by and large." This is a policy for organizing "activists," as opposed to organizing the entire membership.

This view implies that the source of all political ideas is the leadership and that the main role for the membership is to listen and receive reports from the leading bodies. This comes through clearly in the way Comrade Percy counterposes the role of the party newspaper to the weekly branch meeting. "Obviously," he says, "*Direct Action* has a much richer content in any one issue than any single branch meeting does, so it already is [the organizer of the party] if comrades read and study it."

And he comments on this further. "At a meeting of the printshop staff, comrades will discuss how to do the work better, the problems that have arisen. The same with our editorial boards and so on in all the areas of our day-to-day work. They can have a richer life than the general meetings of the branches."

In other words, the members would do better to read the paper every week than to sit around in branch meetings that have become, as Percy says, "a little bit of a dry bone to gnaw on."

Reading the party paper, however, is quite a different thing from participating in a branch meeting. At a branch meeting, the membership doesn't just, or even primarily, hear reports, but thinks about and discusses proposals, modifies them, or if necessary rejects them, debates alternative proposals and decides by majority vote what the comrades in any city or locality are going to do. Branch meetings are not for the "information" of the comrades. They are the party's most basic unit, where the membership discusses and decides branch priorities, policies, and political positions.

Trade union policy

Now, an essential aspect of the matter is how these changes, which represent a retreat from the turn to the industrial unions, are reflected in the trade union policy of the organization. The members of the Political Committee began to take a closer look at the Australian SWP's new trade union policy when we received a letter from Comrade Lovell a couple of months ago saying he had read some of the Australian SWP material and thought the Australians were doing model trade union work.

There are two reports that lay this new line out very clearly. One was a report that Comrade Percy gave about a year ago, entitled "What was wrong with our old trade union line." The other is the trade union resolution that was adopted at the most recent conference of the organization.

Percy's report, published in Vol. 10, No. 8, of the Australian SWP's discussion bulletin, begins, as we've seen, with the assertion that "the turn is behind us" so, it continues, it's time to be asking "where do we go from here?" A few sentences are worth quoting here to get the drift of the argument. Percy quotes a previous report he gave in September 1981, which stated:

What we're pointing out about this period is that the objective conditions exist for the development of a class-struggle left wing. That's why we raise this idea, not because it's some far-off prospect. The problem is that the bureaucrats stand in the way of its development. At every turn, in every direction, they block it.

After quoting this, Percy resumes:

That is a very important statement. If that position is true (and no one has challenged it as yet) then certain conclusions flow from it in my opinion. If the *objective conditions exist* for the class struggle left wing, what are the next steps? What is the way this class struggle left wing can develop? What things can we do? How can we help the process forward? [Original emphasis.]

Pointing to the past orientation, Percy says "... our perspective becomes overwhelmingly *propagandistic*. That is not good enough for a party that says the class-struggle left wing is possible to be built *now*." He emphasizes again later that if the class-struggle left wing is "already able to be built ... we should not say that it is possible only by the rising tide schema of the class struggle," that is a massive upsurge in the class struggle, "there is an economic crisis *now*. It is a situation for the Australian working class *now*." [Emphasis in original.]

Comrade Percy points out the main conclusion of all this — "the question left out is what is our role in the *development* of the class struggle left wing, which in another breath, in another place we always say will be essential, on the level of program anyway." He goes on: "if we are saying that a class-struggle left wing is possible to be built today [then] our demands are relevant, our program can be implemented, if there was a leadership that would fight for it in the labor movement today."

The simple assumption underlying this was explained in Percy's report. "People talk about a conservative worker. But what is a conservative worker in the end. A conservative worker is a by-product of the interaction between the trade union bureaucracy and the boss. ... Workers wouldn't be conservative if they knew they had better leadership, they could struggle better, if the deck wasn't stacked so much against them right from the beginning." We'll come back to this theme in a minute.

This line is then spelled out and elaborated in the trade union resolution, the draft of which is reprinted in *Socialist Worker* Vol. 2, No. 1, October 1982, pp. 29-47, and which was subsequently adopted at the January 1983 conference. The entire proposal, the heart of it, boils down to running in trade union elections, often through "rank-and-file" groups or caucuses, and orienting to these caucuses. This is presented as the axis of the work of the fractions and as the means by which a class-struggle left wing will be brought into being in Australia today.

This resolution begins with some discussion of the unions, the labor aristocracy, and the relationship between it and the labor bureaucracy. It has some good quotes from Lenin describing the rise of imperialism, and the rise of the labor aristocracy that came with it. But then something strange happens in the analysis. The connections between the labor bureaucracy, the labor aristocracy, and imperialism are thrown out the window. The social foundation on which the labor bureaucracy bases itself within the labor movement is said to no longer exist. Everything that Lenin explained is gone. As a result, the labor bureaucracy is left hanging in midair, ready to be swept away like a cobweb by a small but determined party.

The bureaucrats' role helps to maintain conservatism in the ranks of the unions even after the elimination of the economic circumstances that gave birth to that conservatism.

Today, that is, the economic basis of their

hold is gone. The resolution goes on:

the bureaucracy is an extremely narrow layer. And it is weak in that it lacks the stable base provided by a necessary relationship to the means of production, was brought into existence by economic circumstances that are increasingly abnormal and exceptional, and can maintain its influence only through widespread false consciousness in the ranks of the unions.

The political conclusion that flows from this, or more accurately the political premise from which this theory is derived, is now introduced as the reason for the turn. Everything we wrote and agreed about the meaning and purpose of the turn is now rewritten to say the turn was a response to this development — the weakening of the bureaucracy and the immediate openings for an alternative class struggle formation, however small, as long as it's bold enough and determined enough.

The resolution says that the

turn was based on an understanding of the necessity for revolutionaries to take their program to the working class in its mass organisations and on an analysis of objective conditions which saw that it was both necessary and possible to begin the struggle against the bureaucracy for influence over the union ranks.

It goes on to explain:

Now is the time for the party to step up its efforts at linking up with and bringing together the initial nuclei of the class-struggle left wing, those militant sections of the working class that are looking for solutions to the present crisis on the basis of class-struggle unionism and a fight against the bureaucracy of both the "left" and right varieties.

This only makes sense, of course, if you declare war on the entire bureaucracy. This is the explicit line of the resolution.

All this is focused on short-term efforts to change the leadership of the unions.

Class struggle fighters can no longer ignore the question of the official leadership in the fight for immediate demands. . . .

But if an election campaign is to be part of our union strategy, if it is to be a natural step in the party's winning of influence in the unions, then it will also be aimed at winning, even when the likelihood is small. The standing of candidates is a *declaration of war on the bureaucracy, delivered openly before the entire membership*. [Emphasis added.] It announces that the party is serious about becoming the official leadership as its transitional policies win support. Hence to run a campaign that was only propagandistic would in effect be to make light of the problems confronting the membership. It would trivialise the burning question of proletarian leadership.

Because the party is serious about becoming both the *de facto* and official leadership of the unions, the growth of party influence will eventually mean that standing in union elections is the norm rather than the exception.

This line is promoted with a lot of what can only be called hype. The immediate possibilities are exaggerated, quick gains are projected, immediate growth is promised, the perspective is held out of outdistancing all rival currents in the working class in short order — all if we act *now*.

For instance, in his political report to the 1983 conference of the Australian SWP, Comrade Percy said that, "the prediction we made of a confrontation with *all* of the layers of the labor bureaucracy is coming true." [Emphasis added.] He went on:

We reject any idea of retreat, of not slugging it out, any idea that we are not yet bold enough, not yet aspiring enough to lead this offensive. Next year, with the boldness of our election campaign, with the boldness of trying to pull together a left-wing current in the trade union movement, we don't care if we are called a small fringe group in this framework because we are winning youth more quickly than any other current in this country. And that's the pledge of the future.

The fact that the Australian SWP is only a tiny nucleus is not seen as an obstacle to implementing this perspective. The trade union resolution asserts, "While the present small size of the vanguard party in Australia limits the number of workers who can be directly exposed to the revolutionary perspective for the unions, this is no reason for pessimism and no justification for delaying the process of beginning to unite whatever class-struggle tendencies are available."

As Comrade Percy put it in October 1982, "We have thrown down a gauntlet to the bureaucracy."

There are two immediate and related conclusions that flow from this. First, challenging the bureaucracy across the board, right and left, no distinction, as the major axis of the work of the trade union fractions. Second, an extension of this is that participation in, or initiation of, small caucuses composed of our fractions and other individual militants or small groupings of radicals becomes the framework of the work in industry and in the unions in general.

This is all motivated by the promise of quick gains — we can really grow, we can outdistance our rivals. And it all comes from a reaction against the turn. It feeds on impatience and disappointments that are generated when the turn is projected as leading to immediate growth, when it is projected as an "easy" thing, without problems. When comrades run into problems, when the projected short-term gains fail to materialize, a reaction against the turn can set in. When the leadership gives in to and encourages this reaction, you have the beginning of a headlong political retreat. That is what has happened in the Australian SWP.

One thing that is particularly striking about the trade union resolution is that while it quotes heavily from a lot of books, one set of books it never refers to at all is the Teamster series by Farrell Dobbs. In fact, none of the things written by Farrell are mentioned — not his books, nor the articles on trade union strategy and tactics, which have recently been reprinted in a new *Education for Socialists Bulletin* ["Selected Articles on the Labor Movement," available for \$1.50 from Pathfinder Press]. All the lessons contained in these materials are simply ignored.

Apparently the Australian leadership no longer thinks, as we in the SWP do, that understanding the lessons of the experience of our

comrades in the Teamsters union in the 1930s and the application of these lessons to today is essential to an understanding of a communist approach to work in the trade unions. Maybe they think that reading too much Dobbs threw them off the track, although none of them have ever mentioned this to any of us, nor made any other explanation of their rejection of Farrell's books as an essential part of our approach in the labor movement.

That is a shame because much of what Farrell has written deals directly with the questions of strategy on which the leadership of the Australian SWP has developed its adventurist policies.

For example, the comrades in Australia would benefit from reading or rereading the "Afterword" to Farrell's *Teamster Bureaucracy*. There he writes, for example, that under conditions of intensifying employer offensive as part of the overall capitalist offensive, and the resulting growing combativity of the ranks,

... opposition to the present official union policies can be organized on an expanding scale. Large numbers of workers can be brought, in stages, toward adoption of a class-struggle program required to defend their interests — if the left-wing forces in their midst proceed with the necessary patience and astuteness.

It would be unwise, for instance, to begin with efforts to vote incumbent officials out of office so that correct policies might be instituted forthwith by a new leadership. The bureaucrats could normally counter such a move rather easily at the present juncture. They would need only to direct an appeal to the more backward sections of the union membership, claiming no more was involved than the "outs" trying to dump the "ins." Since arguments in favor of new policies would seem rather remote to many workers upon first hearing them, the reactionaries could easily fog the issues. There would be no real prospect of immediately ousting the incumbents, and a false impression could be created that they are immune to removal through an election contest.

If the rebel forces proceed, instead, by pressing at the outset for official adoption, or at least tolerance, of policies that will enable the workers to fight off the capitalist assault on their living standards, better results can be obtained. As things get worse under the present officers, broadening layers of the membership will become more open-minded toward new ideas and methods of action. Awareness will grow that organized labor is on the wrong track programmatically. Pressures will mount for a major shift in line. When the incumbents fail to respond adequately, more and more workers will come to recognize that the leadership personnel must be changed, and they will be ready to act accordingly. [*Teamster Bureaucracy*, p. 292. Available for \$6.95 from Pathfinder Press.]

As comrades will recall, our party has had to discuss these very same questions of strategic orientation in the unions today. This has come up in the fractions, and we have had to think through carefully these questions, including the question of making participation in union elections an axis of the work of the fractions. In this regard, it is worth rereading the report by Craig Gannon that was adopted by the national Machinists' fraction in April 1980, which discusses exactly this question. [See

Craig stressed that:

Under conditions of class combat, revolutionary Marxists will have a chance to show what we can do in action — to demonstrate in practice the correctness of our perspective and prove our capacity to lead. We will win the allegiance of our co-workers through the role our tendency plays in charting an effective struggle against the bosses and government.

As this kind of mass rank-and-file movement develops it will also divide the officialdom. Most will be unceremoniously booted out of the way. A few will come over to the side of the class-struggle fighters.

It is in this kind of a combat period, on the crest of a much broader wave that will sweep the misleadership of the unions aside, that we will contend for the direct leadership of the unions. To attempt to do so now is premature, to say the least.

It is this approach, apparently, that Comrade Percy refers to and dismisses as “the rising tide schema” of the class struggle — although he doesn’t say explicitly who is supposed to hold this schema. In fact, a good portion of the trade union resolution and Percy’s report on “What was wrong with our old trade union line” are indirect polemics against the approach of the SWP in the United States to building union fractions and carrying out communist work in the unions.

How is this new line expressed in practice? In the auto fraction in the Melbourne branch, for example, there were some disagreements over the orientation of the party. This is all detailed in discussion contributions contained in the Australian SWP’s preconference discussion bulletin [Vol. 10, No. 10, December, 1982].

The Australian SWP had five comrades working in auto, all in the one plant. The union has around 15,000 members in that state. These five comrades got together with three or four other union members from another plant to organize a caucus, which had a structure and regular meetings, averaging seven or eight people including our comrades. Participation in the caucus, whose aim was to contest the union elections, was projected as the major orientation and task of the party fraction. The fraction went through the election campaign and then kept this caucus going afterwards.

If you read the facts in these discussion contributions, you can see how an ultraleft, adventurist, and sectarian stance towards the bureaucracy gets combined with rightist concessions and capitulations on important political questions. For example, the workers our comrades formed the caucus with didn’t agree with us on protectionism, which is an important question in Australia like it is here, and an issue on which the Australian SWP has campaigned. But these people held quite strongly to a different position. In fact, one of the main candidates in the election and major spokesperson of the caucus was known as a person who, even during the election campaign, campaigned for protectionism by circulating a petition to demand that imported cars and trucks be kept out of Australia. This was handled in the caucus by agreeing that the campaign would

not deal with the question of protectionism. In the meantime, each of the candidates expressed their own views.

In the steel industry the comrades initiated a “Militant Action Campaign” to contest the leadership of the union. Again, there is a lot of information about this in the pre-convention discussion bulletins. The fraction even ran against a local leadership that was to the left of the national leadership, and widely regarded as such by the union ranks.

In the ironworkers’ union the fraction organized a slate of candidates, the majority of them party members, to oppose both national and local officials. Because the fraction only had members in two or three places, the Australian SWP mobilized party members who were not members of the union to distribute leaflets all around the country for the candidates of the caucus.

Such union election campaigns are now the chief focus of the Australian SWP’s union activity. You can draw your own conclusions from our own experiences what impact this must have on the work of the fractions in industry — what they’re doing and what they’re not doing.

Ultraleft stance toward Labor Party

This adventurist and sectarian policy in the unions is accompanied by an ultraleft stance towards the Labor Party, and an orientation toward attempts to “regroup” with others on the left with whom the Australian SWP leadership believes it can proceed to build a class-struggle left wing. For example, it finds common ground with the pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia, which has a similarly sectarian attitude to the Labor Party.

In March this year a Labor government came into office in Australia with the biggest parliamentary majority ever. In this election campaign, for the first time, the Australian SWP broke from what had been its past practice. Previously it had campaigned for a Labor Party victory, while using the opportunity to run several candidates in safe Labor districts for the purpose of explaining the program being advanced by the party.

Instead, in this election campaign the organization ran as many candidates as it possibly could, and not just in safe Labor seats. The real content of the campaign, the thrust of the propaganda, was not so much to vote Labor as to vote Socialist Workers. This was the clear message, for example, in the election supplement in the February 8 *Direct Action*, which introduced the party’s 48 candidates — about a quarter of the membership of the organization.

The slogan for a Labor Party victory got reduced here to “For a labor government with socialist policies.” But this is “labor” in lower case, and a labor government with socialist policies. It is ambiguous on the question of whether you are clearly for the election of the *Australian Labor Party* as the existing mass party of Australian workers, regardless of the pro-capitalist program of its misleaders. There is an ambiguity about whether in fact this “labor government with socialist policies” is

not in fact one and the same thing as the Socialist Workers Party. It avoids a clear declaration in support of an ALP victory.

In fact, much of the SWP’s election propaganda was aimed as much, if not more, at the Labor Party as at the capitalist Liberal Party. This blurring over of the fundamental differences between Labor and the Liberal Party comes through in the text of the election supplement.

The employers have every reason to be delighted with the way this election campaign is being presented. The *two big parties* [emphasis added] are telling us it’s a choice between the Liberals’ wage freeze and Labor’s “prices and incomes” agreement with the ACTU [Australian Council of Trade Unions]. But for workers, both policies are a fraud.

And, later, “The ‘gimmicks’ promised by the *big parties* will raise profits all right, but they won’t save any jobs [emphasis added].”

The articles in *Direct Action* instead take the form of a warning of the treacherous policies that will be implemented if Labor is elected. The articles are full of statements such as, a Labor government “will be little more than another group of faces presiding over the capitalist recession”; the Labor Party’s “prices and incomes policy” is no different from the Liberal Party wage freeze; “What alternative does the Labor Party leadership offer? . . . Only a less obvious and therefore more insidious version of [Liberal Prime Minister] Fraser’s wage-cutting policy.”

In the course of the campaign this year, it turned out that the preferential votes for at least one SWP candidate may have been decisive in defeating a left-wing Labor Party candidate. This received quite a lot of publicity in the labor movement, according to the reports in *Direct Action*. There was widespread hostility to this candidacy from many workers in the Labor Party who no doubt wondered why the SWP should deliberately stand against one of the left-wing Labor candidates running in a marginal non-Labor seat.

The Australian section responded to this discussion by defending this policy and further deepening this sectarian line. “We categorically reject the notion that the ALP [Australian Labor Party] has a divine right to monopolize alternative courses of action presented to the working class.”

The *Direct Action* article of March 15 asserts:

... if there is a leakage of SWP preferences [there is a preferential voting system in Australia] to the Australian Democrats or the Liberals, the fault for this does not lie with the SWP. The fault lies with those who give the ALP a program so class-colaborationist that the program of the Democrats or the Liberals can appear superior to some workers. And it lies as well with ‘socialists’ who refuse to distance themselves from that program.

It continues:

Were the ALP leaders to give us their preferences, that is to make a united front of all workers’ parties against those of the bosses, they would build workers’ consciousness and far fewer of the workers’ parties preferences would ‘leak’.

The approach is summed up in the concluding paragraph of the article. "Alerting workers to the dangers and opportunities ahead is far more important than the number of 'socialists' [Labor Party head] Bob Hawke has helping to cover for his social contract."

Some other differences

In reviewing some of the publications of the Australian SWP, it is evident that there are a growing number of issues on which sharp divergences with working-class politics are emerging. I am not going to review them all, but there are a couple that I want to call to the attention of comrades so that we can be thinking about them.

One of these concerns a strike by sheep shearers in Australia. One of the issues in this strike was the importation of sheep shearers from New Zealand, where they use wider and more productive shears. One demand of the union officialdom was to ban the importation of these tools, the wide shearing combs, on the grounds that this would help protect jobs for Australian workers.

The following paragraph appeared in *Direct Action* [April 19, 1983] on this:

The woolgrowers are using non-union labor, especially from New Zealand, to get their sheep shorn. New Zealand shearers are being lured here with promises of special exchange rates, plus bonus payments out of season. Many fly in, work seven days a week, sleep in cars, pay no tax and then fly back to New Zealand.

These workers "pay no tax and then fly back to New Zealand"! This is the repetition of the utterly anti-working class, anti-Marxist idea that workers in Australia suffer because immigrant workers "pay no tax" — even if it is true that they pay no taxes. And what is the point about these workers sleeping in cars? Is it supposed to show they are less civilized, or greedy, or what? (There is no demand raised about decent housing for these workers — or any other demand aimed at protecting the interests of *all* the sheep shearers — whether Australian or from New Zealand.)

These are the kind of arguments we hear all the time from labor bureaucrats in the United States against immigrant workers from Mexico and the rest of Latin America. I don't know the details of the situation of sheep shearers in Australia, but you don't need to know that to catch the disturbing odor of this kind of argument being advanced in the paper of the Australian section of the Fourth International.

A second thing especially worth noting is the political approach of the Australian SWP to building a youth group. In the June 21, 1983, issue of *Direct Action* there is an advertisement headed "Join Resistance: the young fighters for socialism." It begins:

"I wish I was young again!" Ever heard that before? Most young people have. But these days, perhaps being young is not the best thing in the world. In fact being young makes life quite hard sometimes.

But "being" young in the abstract doesn't make your life hard. Being a young worker,

yes, but not just "being young."

The ad continues:

The dole is only \$40, there are no jobs for people who leave school early, there is no good, cheap, entertainment going on in most places. . . . The future really looks a bit gloomy when you add that ever-increasing threat of nuclear war, and the general absence of peace [!] in the world today. It is quite difficult to pinpoint the cause of all the problems in the world today, but one thing is clear — there are a lot of them.

Resistance is an organisation of young people who want a better world. We don't have all the solutions, but we do know that by working together, discussing things out, and getting active around the issues that concern us, we can be a lot more effective than on our own.

We are easy to find, and easy to join. Drop into the Resistance centre in your city or send in the clip-off below.

This entire advertisement has no class content, and no class orientation. Nor does it have anything to do with working-class politics. What is the meaning, for example, of terms such as "the general absence of peace in the world today"?

The differences over Poland seem to have deepened, as well. Take, for example, what the Australian SWP has said about the pope's visit to Poland. *Direct Action's* assessment of this event was to see the visit chiefly as a triumph for Solidarity, an opening for Polish workers to demonstrate their support for their outlawed union. It ignored the reactionary character of the pope's visit, and the fact that this was part of imperialism's drive against the workers and peasants of Poland and the rest of the world.

Thus in its June 28 issue, *Direct Action* explains:

There can be no doubt that the Pope's visit provided Polish people — at least 70 per cent of whom are Catholic — with a special opportunity to turn the huge, open-air celebrations of mass into political demonstrations.

From the moment he arrived, of course, the Pope made no bones about declaring his support for the Polish workers [!] and opposition to the martial-law rule of the Jaruzelski regime.

To the dismay of the Polish bureaucracy, such an immensely popular political stance served to embolden Polish people and give them the courage to demonstrate clearly that the regime continues to have no significant base of support or social acceptance whatsoever.

In an editorial on the pope's visit in the preceding issue of *Direct Action*, contrast is made between the pope's role in Poland and his role when he visited Central America some months earlier. But the heart of the matter is the complete continuity between the two trips.

Support for right-wing Croatian group

An example of the erratic political positions taken, and clung to, by the leadership of the Australian section is its support for a right-wing organization of Croatian emigres, the HDP, which calls for the destruction of the Yugoslav workers' state and the establishment of multiple states in the region "along the lines of the Scandinavian states." HDP are the ini-

tials for "Croatian Movement for Statehood." The Australian leadership in a report adopted by its National Committee, June 12, 1983, and reprinted in the August 1983 issue of the SWP's journal *Socialist Worker*, states, "In our view, the HDP leaders are revolutionaries."

There has been a quite big debate over this issue in the Australian left and labor movement, sparked by the Australian SWP's embrace of this organization. The debate has even been taken up by the bourgeois press. It will also be a discussion within the Fourth International.

There is a large Yugoslav immigrant population in Australia. It includes some 200,000 Croats. So this is not a small question in the working-class movement there. There are numerous political differentiations within the Croatian community, not only between left and right, but also among the right-wing forces.

The Australian SWP has established a relationship with an organization in the Croatian community that openly traces its roots and heritage back to a fascist movement in Croatia, which was installed by the Nazis as the "Independent State of Croatia" in April 1941. The HDP, in fact, holds anniversary celebrations on the day this movement was placed in power.

This was a movement called the Ustasha. The Ustasha regime, which ran the so-called Independent State of Croatia between 1941 and 1945, organized the massacre of up to half a million Yugoslavs — including Croats, Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, Communists, and Partisans.

The Ustasha still exists today under one guise or another in many countries. It organizes among right-wing Croats and has a lot of enemies among Yugoslavs, including progressive Croats. It has boasted of responsibility for many acts of terrorism against Yugoslav government officials, consular buildings, travel agencies, and airlines around the world. It is also responsible for terrorist acts against political opponents in Yugoslav-Croatian communities abroad.

The paper published by the HDP features photos and interviews with military leaders of the wartime Ustasha regime, presenting them as heroes of the struggle of the Croatian people.

A constant theme of the HDP's propaganda is its objections to what it claims is exaggeration and misrepresentation of this wartime regime, which really wasn't so bad.

The Ustasha didn't really massacre half a million people during the war but only 50,000. . . . The Ustasha has been given a bad rap.

So the Australian SWP leaders try to help them out. A special supplement to *Direct Action* explains that,

. . . in order to avoid falling into stereotyped anti-Croat positions, it is important to have scientific

analysis of Pavelic [the head of the Ustasha government during World War II] and the Ustasha.

The first point to make is that the Ustasha was *not* a fascist movement, not, that is, in the Marxist meaning of the term.

Fascism is a term which is somewhat loosely used by many people. It is often applied to any regime whose methods of repression resemble the police-state techniques of Hitler. . . .

But rather than use the term in this all-embracing sense, it is far more useful to give fascism the precise Marxist meaning which it carried in Leon Trotsky's masterly writings on the subject in the 1930s.

Direct Action then proceeds to cite Trotsky's class analysis of fascism for the purpose of prettifying the Ustasha's wartime regime — all in the name of "scientific" Marxism.

This is the way *Direct Action* describes the HDP:

The HDP feels that all avenues for fundamental reform of the existing Yugoslav federation have been exhausted. . . . The HDP argues that only a break from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia and the creation of a completely independent state will provide a framework for the full development of the Croatian nation.

It remains implicit that the SWP also shares these views, as there is no alternative point of view presented in this article or in the entire four-page supplement.

Then the article has to start defending the HDP's views and justifying its interviews with Ustasha leaders, and so on.

It [the HDP] is forced to confront the wartime experience of the regime of Pavelic and the Ustasha. This was a civil war which split the Croatian people. The HDP works in a community where many people come from the Ustasha tradition, or have been influenced by it, or have illusions in it.

Hence the HDP, correctly, discusses and debates the Ustasha tradition or aspects of it. This is essential to mobilise support for the HDP program.

This may mean interviews with former Ustasha leaders who for many in the Croatian community represent a militant nationalist tradition and who may be changing politically. This is certainly going to be the case in the framework of a paper like *Croatian Weekly*, which is the largest circulation Croatian-language paper in the country and which reflects to some extent the spectrum of the nationalist aspirations of the Croat people.

Well, the former Ustasha leaders certainly represent a militant nationalist tradition — a militantly *reactionary* nationalist tradition.

So this question of the SWP's support for the HDP has become quite a topic of discussion in Australia. Almost every organization on the left and many people in the Labor Party have been criticizing the position taken by the Australian SWP. Some, of course, have pursued this campaign for purely factional reasons. However, the Australian SWP's only response has been to deepen the error, to justify it and construct abstract theories to this end.

This apparently didn't begin with any big, thought-out plan. The Croatian HDP, for its own reasons, made some approaches to various radicals, including the Australian SWP. The SWP actively defended their right to

march in May Day demonstrations against criticism from others in the labor movement who objected to their banners reading "Smash Fascist Yugoslavia" and wanted to exclude them from this working-class celebration.

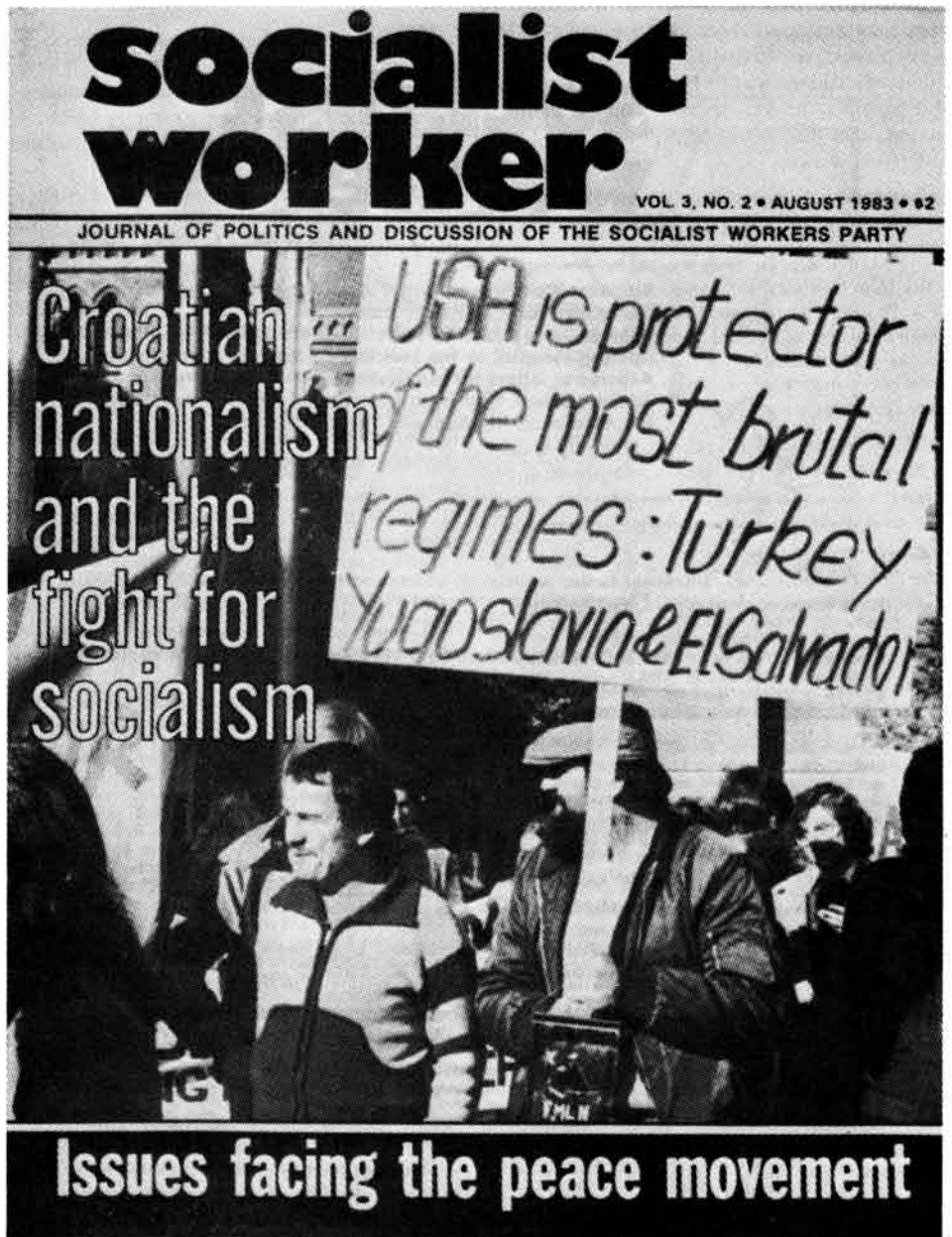
The reaction to this of the Australian SWP leadership was not to step back and think that maybe it was time to look a little more closely at who these people were. Instead, it was to react to every criticism by deepening the error. A big campaign was launched in *Direct Action* — full-page articles, four-page supplements. Special forums were held. Almost an entire issue of their magazine was given over to a defense of the politics of the HDP, and polemics against those who have criticized their support

for it.

The concluding paragraphs of a report by Dave Holmes adopted at the SWP's June National Committee meeting and reprinted in the August issue of *Socialist Worker* read:

In our view, the HDP leaders are revolutionaries. They have a different history to ourselves; they have been formed by the experiences of national oppression in a Stalinised workers state. But we are confident that as a result of their experiences, including in this their collaboration with our party, they are moving in a progressive direction.

The HDP comrades have already registered impressive successes in building an organisation with a weekly paper and extending their influence. We can certainly appreciate that.



Cover of August 1983 "Socialist Worker," published by the Socialist Workers Party of Australia. For a critical evaluation of the Australian SWP's position on the Croatian movement, see "Croatian Group Stirs Debate on Left," by Nita Keig, *Intercontinental Press*, Oct. 15, 1984, which can be ordered from *IP* for \$1.25.

As a result of the collaboration between the HDP and the SWP and also through the development of the class struggle in this country, many more Croats will come to see the need to build a revolutionary workers' party here and fight to overthrow capitalism. We hope they will join the SWP. Some will belong to both the HDP and the SWP. In our view there is no contradiction in this, as we are both working for the same end — a world free of class exploitation and national oppression.

Well, this organization certainly may have an "anti-bureaucratic dynamic," but it doesn't have anything to do with the fight against class exploitation or for proletarian revolution. It is an anticommunist outfit whose reactionary program on Yugoslavia is opposed to the interests of the Croatian workers and peasants, as well as to the interests of all the other working people of Yugoslavia, who will be thrown back in their struggle if the HDP and its ilk succeed in their goal of overthrowing the Yugoslav workers' state. This would be a defeat, not an advance, for the fight for "a world free of class exploitation and national oppression."

The stand on the HDP taken by the leadership of the Australian SWP, and vigorously promoted and defended by them, is a serious political problem for the entire Fourth International.

A couple of months ago, Comrade Ernest Mandel sent a personal letter to Jim Percy. Mandel enclosed a document written by "a specialist on Yugoslavia" arguing strongly against any political support to the HDP and its counterrevolutionary program. Mandel told the Australian comrades that:

While not necessarily concurring with her on all nuances, we believe that her line is fundamentally correct. We urge you to take her considerations seriously, and consider them as objections to any political support to the people concerned (another thing is of course solidarity in front of repression.) Please let me know what you think of her analysis.

This material from Mandel was circulated at the June 1983 National Committee meeting of the Australian SWP — but no answer to it has yet been made available to the International leadership, if indeed an answer has yet been sent at all.

It is clear that this issue will have to be taken up in the International. Silence in the face of this kind of scandalous political line by a section of the International can only be interpreted as acquiescence.

Camejo-Percy-Lorimer resolution on Cuba

Now I want to turn to the resolution entitled "The Cuban Revolution and Its Extension," which has been submitted to the forthcoming World Congress for a vote by Comrades Camejo, Percy, and Lorimer. Everyone here has received a copy of this resolution in advance of the meeting, so I won't describe what is in it. [See *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. XX, No. 3, July 1984.]

This resolution, as I mentioned, is being circulated in the International for additional signatures. The members of the International Ex-

ecutive Committee who are members of the Socialist Workers Party are not going to add our names to this resolution.

If you have read the resolution, you can see that there is much in there that there is no reason to disagree with. The great bulk of the resolution is descriptive. It quotes heavily from books and articles, including a number that have appeared in *JP* and the *Militant*, and much of this material is of interest. But when it gets down to the discussion of the political and programmatic questions facing the Fourth International, it goes off.

The political heart of the resolution is in the final section, entitled "Castroism and the Fourth International." A critical difference on line between this resolution and the position that the SWP has adopted can be seen clearly from this section, beginning with what it says about what it refers to as the "Castroist" current:

Abstractly, it would be accurate to describe this current simply as "Marxist," but the term does not adequately distinguish these revolutionaries from the Stalinists, Social Democrats, and sectarians who falsely claim that title. Both enemies and supporters of socialism have recognized the distinct character of these new Marxist vanguards by describing them, in reference to the first of them to achieve victory, as "Fidelista" or "Castroist." The term should be understood in the sense just outlined: The FSLN, for example, is "Castroist" in the same way that Fidel and the Cuban CP are "Sandinistas." Both terms refer to Marxist vanguards that have emerged in the specific conditions of the underdeveloped countries of the Western Hemisphere. A correct political orientation to this current is of the utmost importance for the Fourth International.

You know, some of these sentences sound, at first glance, fairly straightforward and not controversial. But if you go back over them a couple of times, they often dissolve into vague banalities, or you realize they are dead wrong.

The section begins, for example, with a fairly lengthy discussion of terminology, and why the term "Marxist" isn't so useful to describe the Cubans and the other proletarian vanguards that have come forward in Central America and the Caribbean. It says that to call them Marxists wouldn't distinguish them from the Stalinists and Social Democrats who claim to be Marxist. But surely that is a poor reason to not use the term Marxist, if it is accurate. What about us?

Then we learn that "enemies and supporters of socialism" have both acknowledged the "distinct character" of these vanguards by labeling them as "Fidelista" or "Castroist." But the Nicaraguans, the Grenadians, and the Salvadorans don't classify themselves as "Castroist." Nor do the Cubans. The Cubans see themselves as revolutionary Marxists.

The resolution then "explains" that the FSLN "is 'Castroist' in the same way that Fidel and the Cuban CP are 'Sandinistas.'" But what does that mean? What does it mean? You can't tell at all. All we know is that there is something about the "specific conditions of the underdeveloped countries of the Western

Hemisphere" that these leaderships share and that binds them together, distinct from others. But what?

The political problem comes in when you try to define who is part of this "Castroist current" as it is defined in this resolution. The resolution lists, for example, both the FMLN and the FDR leaders as part of this current. Is that true? Is Guillermo Ungo, the Social Democrat who heads the FDR, really part of the "Castroist current"? If the comrades who wrote this resolution really think so, then what is it they really mean by "Castroism"?

Then, we learn that this term refers to "the Cuban Communist Party, NJM, FSLN, FMLN, FDR, URNG [Guatemala], and similar organizations in other countries." [Emphasis added.]

But which countries? And which organizations? The resolution doesn't give us a clue. It does say, however, that there are such groupings in the imperialist countries, although these are "few." But even so, it would seem to be a pretty important fact. Who are they? And how can they be "Castroists" if what defines "Castroism" has to do with the "specific conditions of the underdeveloped countries of the Western Hemisphere"?

As you can see, on the slightest scrutiny, the whole thing collapses in a mass of contradiction. But what is underneath this is a very real political line. You can see this if you refer back to the documents submitted by Camejo to the United Secretariat prior to the 1982 meeting of the IEC, in which Camejo explained some of his disagreements with the line of our party. [These documents are reprinted in *Internal Information Bulletin* No. 1 in 1982, pp. 126-137.]

One of these documents concerns the discussion that took place in the New York City local around the mayoral campaign in 1981. At that time, Camejo presented a line, which was rejected by the membership of the local at a convention, that would have oriented our election campaign toward a "left bloc" that Camejo proposed we try to pull together for the elections. He proposed we orient toward those groups in New York City who were "under the influence of the Fidelista current." And who were they? Camejo named them: the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, El Comité, the National Black Independent Political Party, the Black United Front, Casa de las Americas — and "etc."

Most of these groups, then as now, were supporting the Democratic Party, and campaigning for the Democrats in the 1981 elections. What does that orientation have to do with "Castroism"? What does that have in common with the fight to advance independent working-class and Black political action?

What has that got to do with Marxism? This was debated and rejected by the New York Local — and shortly afterward Camejo quit the party. He failed to convince the comrades in New York that his orientation toward the "Castroists" in New York City was anything other

than a retreat from Marxism and a retreat from proletarian politics, and a step toward petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois politics covered up with praise for the "Cuban" line.

This today is the line of the Camejo grouping in the United States — heading straight toward the Democratic Party while claiming to be carrying out the "Castroist" or "Sandinista" line in the United States! This is the line of the international Camejo-Percy current, and it is the line that runs through this resolution.

Summary

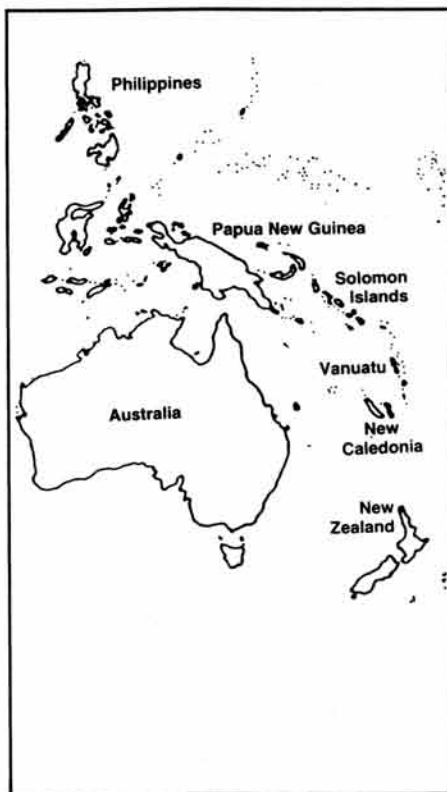
There is no proposal to put the line of this report to a vote here. There is no action proposed in this report. Its purpose is to inform the National Committee of the existence and political character of the international Percy-Camejo current, and to explain why none of the members of the party who are members of the IEC are going to sign the resolution submitted by these comrades. The leadership of the party needs to be thinking about all of this as we chart a course in the international discussion.

The Political Committee decided to propose this point on the agenda here in response to the communication from Percy, Lorimer, and Camejo soliciting support for their resolution. The report itself, however, is the result of a discussion in the Secretariat of the Political Committee; this was not one of the reports that the Political Committee discussed in preparation for the National Committee meeting.

But I repeat, there is no action proposed here. The National Committee doesn't need to vote on the line of the resolution submitted to the international discussion by these comrades. And no other action in relation to the Australian SWP leadership is called for. The comrade who is here from the Australian SWP will give the comrades back there a report on the political views that have been expressed here, and I am sure we will have plenty of opportunity for political discussions on these questions with comrades from Australia in the future.

Now, what about the discussion inside the Australian SWP itself? How much of what I have reported here reflects the thinking of the entire leadership? Some comrades have asked here if there is opposition being expressed within the party to this course. There was some disagreement expressed at the last convention with some of these positions, although not with all of them. Some comrades disagreed with the line on Poland; there was some opposition to aspects of the trade union report; and there was opposition expressed to the orientation of the Australian SWP leadership in the anti-nuclear weapons protests — one of the points that for lack of time I didn't take up in the report.

Some delegates to the convention, and some of the National Committee members, opposed the line presented on one or more of these points. There were some counterline reports presented, including by some of the long-time central leaders of the organization. But there was, as far as we know, no one who drew all



this together and presented a clear alternative to the overall direction of the leadership's evolution.

What will happen if and when opposition is raised that is more consistent and less nebulous than what has been expressed so far? That we don't know. That is the real question, and it is an open question. What will happen inside the party, and inside the leadership, when comrades who are increasingly opposed to the course of the leadership present a coherent counterposition and start fighting for their position? Will they be allowed to present their views? To what extent will the degeneration of the organizational norms of the Australian SWP block a serious discussion and debate? That's not clear. We just don't know; but that is going to be the next stage in Australia if there is any hope of reversing the political course of the section of the Fourth International there.

We don't know how this will unfold. What is clear is that the central leadership of the party is finished politically. If it isn't replaced, and its programmatic and political positions and line are pursued and deepened, then the party will be finished, too. There is no other conclusion we can draw.

The retreat from the turn in Australia has been accompanied by moves away from democratic functioning, some of which I described in the report. But there are more, and they don't augur well for a democratic discussion in the Australian SWP. In the Melbourne branch (I don't know about the others) the branch executive committee has, in effect, been transformed into a committee of the National Com-

mittee members in the branch. This is not a formal constitutional requirement, but the motivation for the election of a new executive committee was that the branch should elect only the National Committee members, and they were the only ones elected.

The National Committee itself does not include a very high percentage of the developing leadership of the comrades in industry. There is a very high proportion of the comrades on full-time in the party apparatus on the committee.

There is another illuminating innovation on the organizational front in the Australian SWP. There was recently a constitutional amendment that eliminated ranking of the alternate National Committee. The Political Committee now selects whomever they want from the alternate list to fill vacancies in the regular membership of the committee. I don't know if this has been explained in writing; it would be interesting to hear how this change was motivated.

Another step in the same direction and with a more immediate impact was the decision of the last national conference to not reelect to the National Committee at least two (I don't know if there were more than two) of the comrades who had presented or spoken in favor of counterline reports at the conference. These two are Dave Deutschmann and Deb Shnookal, each of whom had been on the National Committee for almost a decade.

These two comrades had both been elected members of the executive committee of their branch, in Melbourne. But since they weren't on the National Committee after the conference, they weren't reelected to the branch committee either, under the new criteria that branch executive committees should be made up of members of the National Committee.

These moves are part of a package with the elimination of weekly branch meetings and other organizational innovations that all work to reduce the democratic rights of the membership.

The evolution of the Percy-Camejo international current poses a challenge to the Fourth International. We have already discussed what this means in connection with Camejo. [See "Resignation of Pedro Camejo from the SWP," a statement by the Secretariat of the Political Committee, in *Internal Information Bulletin* No. 1 in 1982.] Camejo is on a political trajectory that took him out of the SWP, and is going to turn him into an open opponent of the Fourth International.

We now face the danger that the political arch-outs of the leadership of the Australian SWP is going to arch the party right out of the Fourth International. That will mean losing valuable cadres, and will be a blow to the Fourth International. The challenge to the leadership of the International as a whole is to advance the political clarification of the differences with the leadership of the Australian SWP, to minimize the losses and maximize the chances of keeping the Australian section in the Fourth International. □

'Don't take party out of International'

Purged Fourth Internationalists urged rejection of Percy's course

[The following appeal was made Jan. 4, 1985, to the delegates of the January 1985 National Conference of the Australian Socialist Workers Party. The appeal, made on behalf of Australian supporters of the Fourth International, was signed by Lynda Boland, Dave Deutschmann, Nita Keig, Ron Poulsen, Deb Shnookal, and Lee Walkington. The conference refused time for the appeal to be heard and rejected it unanimously.]

* * *

Dear Comrades,

We are addressing ourselves to the delegates of the SWP National Conference in order to call to your attention the central political issues at the heart of the appeal to your conference. We also request time to present this appeal to your conference.

The political direction of the leadership of the SWP (Australian Section of the Fourth International) has set the SWP on a course away from Marxism.

This course includes:

- rejection of the turn to industry and the introduction of an ultraleft and opportunist trade union policy;
- abandonment of class criteria in determining the orientation to mass working class organisations including in the electoral arena;
- adaptation to Stalinism;
- political support for a pro-fascist Croatian emigre organisation (the HDP [Croatian Movement for Statehood — IP]);
- adaptation to the nationalist and pacifist pressures of the peace movement.

This loss of class bearings has resulted in a sectarian degeneration away from advancing the struggle of workers and farmers for power and building the Fourth International.

The SWP leadership has imposed undemocratic and arbitrary conditions on members dissenting from its course. This included denying members of the SWP the right to political collaboration with cothinkers (in the unprecedented form of breaking relations with other parties of the Fourth International). Those who opposed these flagrant violations of the norms of functioning in the International were removed from membership.

As Deutschmann, Keig, Poulsen, and Shnookal stressed in the conclusion to their October 1983 submission to the Control Commission: "We do not intend to be cut off from contact with other parties in our world movement" and "we will not accept the leadership majority moving to take the party out of the Fourth International."

The expulsion of Deutschmann, Keig, Poulsen, and Shnookal was a direct result of their opposition to the dangerous political di-

rection of the SWP leadership.

We call on delegates to reject the SWP leadership's accelerating break from the program of the Fourth International. We urge you to condemn the undemocratic organisational measures that have flowed from this, and to elect a leadership that will reverse this process.

* * *

In November last year the National Executive of the Socialist Workers Party expelled a number of members of the party. This was the culmination of a split course set in motion with a number of decisions taken by the NE on August 31, 1983. During this period a number of other members resigned in protest at the SWP leadership's actions and in solidarity with those expelled.

This has resulted in the existence of another distinct political current in Australia in support of the Fourth International.

The objective of the split engineered by the SWP leadership was to silence a developing minority current within the leadership of the organisation. This expressed internally the anti-internationalist course of severing relations with the U.S. SWP and later other individual leaders and sections of the FI [Fourth International]. The SWP leadership in Australia wanted to play a vanguard role in advancing this split course in the international. At the same time, these actions demonstrated the extraordinary lack of self-confidence of the central leadership in the context of the deepening political debate in our world movement.

The breaking of relations with some parties of our world movement and the subsequent expulsions of those who opposed these moves marked a turning point in the process of insulating the membership of the party from political contact with certain political currents within the international and from full access to all points of view in the international discussion. The NE climaxed its underground campaign against the leadership of the U.S. SWP (which had been cultivated for several years) by breaking relations with the U.S. party and removing all those inside the Australian party who shared any political agreement with its views. Such political agreement was deemed inherently disloyal to the central leaders of the Australian SWP and hence intolerable.

In order to find the technical grounds on which to carry through this purge, the leadership had to conduct a free-floating "investigation." This "investigation" was simply a trial of the political views of the minority. Although it preceded the laying of a single charge, it was obvious that it was set up to prepare the expulsion of the minority. This corrupt method of investigating members in order

to find some grounds on which to charge and try them is contrary to the functioning of any democratic Leninist party, although it has its parallels in the practices of other sectarian currents. The intimidatory atmosphere built up in this investigation is evident in the transcripts and documents included in SWP (Australia) Internal Information Bulletin No. 1 in 1983.

The result of the expulsions was to deprive the membership of the right to hear and participate in a discussion of the emerging differences within the leadership. All the subsequent fanfare from the SWP leadership concerning its various initiatives towards "left unity," fusions, and broad public discussions cannot conceal the fact that it could not face a serious debate over the widening strategic differences with those it expelled.

The spurious charges of "disloyalty" manufactured by the NE to try to justify the purge were merely a means of avoiding a discussion which would call into question the increasingly erratic, ultraleft, and opportunist course being charted by it.

Central to the developing differences in the party was the new course being set by the leadership which meant an abandonment of the political perspectives of the turn to the industrial working class. Instead, the leadership began a mad scramble in search of short cuts to illusory party growth and influence.

In our submission to the SWP control commission (October 7, 1983; see IIB No. 1 in 1984) we pointed to some of the main features of the political evolution of the SWP as we then saw them:

Retreat on the turn

We do not agree with the leadership majority that the turn is "behind us," as is repeatedly claimed. On the contrary, by not meeting the political and organisational challenges of the turn to the industrial working class the turn continues to be undermined. There has been an erosion of our base in industry far beyond that forced on us by objective conditions.

Trade union election strategy

The political corollary of the retreat on the turn is the implementation of the new trade union election strategy. This election strategy sees us initiating both extensive challenges to union posts as well as artificially constructing rank-and-file grouplets which pose — along with the party itself — as the class struggle left wing.

The trade union election strategy prematurely counterposes us as an alternative to the entire existing trade union bureaucracy. It cuts across our political tasks on the job and leads us to try and substitute ourselves for the necessary movement of much broader forces of workers to begin to transform the unions into class struggle instruments.

Sectarianism toward the ALP

A further expression of the party's sectarianism toward the mass organisations of the working class is shown in our orientation to the ALP [Australian Labor Party] and the Labor government. The test of the 1983 elections saw the party presenting itself as an organisational alternative to the ALP and at best ambiguous on the victory of the Labor Party.

The ALP and trade union bureaucracies are portrayed as the main enemy of our class. The content of the election campaign — as well as how we portrayed our party — reflects the leadership majority's growing indifference to the election of the ALP.

The war question

The party leadership continues to take the party away from a sharply anti-imperialist focus for our anti-war work. The adaptation to the peace movement and the failure to see the need for building an anti-imperialist, anti-war movement based in the working class and centered on defence of the Central American and Caribbean revolutions highlights the

Hard-talking Marxist says his peace

By TOM PRIOR

JIM Percy, the national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, blamed for last weekend's split in the Nuclear Disarmament Party, still looks like the university radical he once was.

His beard is red and bushy, his dress tweedy, his glasses metal-rimmed and his mouth usually open and full of polysyllabic words.

But Mr Percy, 35, a bulky, broad-shouldered man, 180cm tall and 100kg heavy, has a touch of the union boss about him ... a union like the Builders' Laborers or Painters and Dockers.

It is extremely hard to arrange an interview with him and next to impossible to persuade him to talk about anything except what he wants to talk about.

Mr Percy, for instance, banished a series of would-be TV interviewers from the SWP offices in Anthony St., City, because, as he put it, he did not want to be "set up".

"This interview ends the moment you ask me anything about the NDP and the weekend conference," he said. "You're out and you know it. You're getting our official statement and that's that.

"But that's not the way the TV people play it.

"They ask you a question they know you won't answer and then take pictures of you throwing up your hands in disgust and your backside as you walk away.

"Not me, not mine they don't."

Mr Percy said the SWP had grown out of the anti-war movement in the mid-1960s. Most of its foundation members came from the university peace movements.

(He had abandoned an arts course at Sydney University in 1966 to concentrate on politics.)

The party, formed in 1972, had grown into a national organisation of about 1000 members spread across every state. The NSW branch, with about 350 members, is the largest.

"At times, it would be fair to say we have been a Trotskyist organisation," Mr Percy said. "But that is no longer valid. We are a Marxist organisation. We don't

call ourselves Trotskyist any more.

"We have revised a good part of our thinking since 1979."

What happened in 1979, I asked, feeling a little foolish.

"NICARAGUA," said Mr Percy. "Nicaragua happened!"

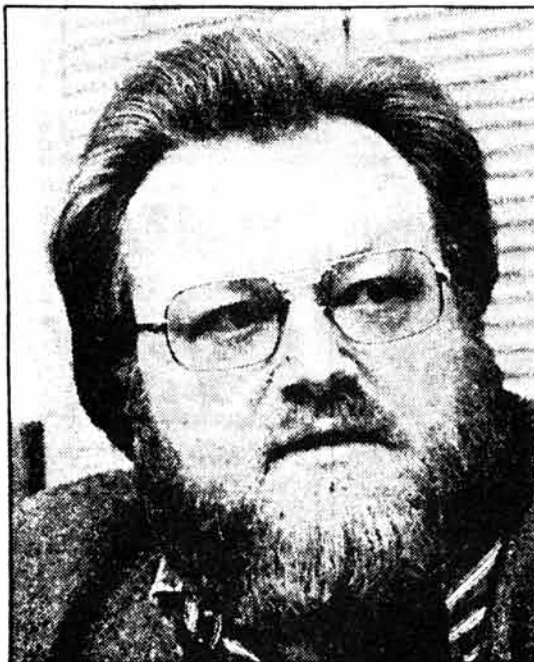
"Nicaragua and the American interference taught us about the real world, about how the process of social change takes place in the Third World.

"Since 1979, we have become much more involved in the trade union movement. We have established the party in the unions.

"We don't line up with any particular faction, we look at each situation as we see it. We are neither Moscow nor Peking."

"We think young people are the key to social change. And that's not because we have been going only 13 years ourselves.

"Resistance' our youth group is 500 strong, 50 per cent of our membership, our strength and our energy."



Jim Percy — "we don't line up with any particular faction".

Mr Percy said SWP members included "white and blue-collar workers, a few professionals and migrants from Europe, Asia and South America."

His own views had been greatly affected by the war in Vietnam, Mr Percy said.

"I had a look around and concluded that it was not an accident the American and Australian Governments took the course they did," he said.

"The peace movement today is bigger than it was during the Vietnam War," he added. "The biggest Vietnam War march in Australia was when 100,000 marched in Melbourne, in 1970.

"On Palm Sunday 170,000 marched in Sydney.

"People are frightened by the nuclear threat, the ever-present international tension. We may be small in numbers, but our ideas and ideals are popular.

"Who, for instance, is in favor of war or unemployment? We act around these themes in demon-

strations." I ventured that I had heard the SWP described as a prime source in the "rent-a-mob" business.

"Other groups, the Trotskyists for instance, are the 'rent-a-mob' groups," Mr Percy said. "We are strictly peaceful protesters. We are non-violent and committed to the peace movement.

"We are registered with the electoral commission and fielded 48 candidates around the country in last year's elections. We polled as high as 2 or 3 per cent of the vote in many seats.

"We publish a weekly newspaper, Direct Action, and organise mass protests on many important issues. We get our view across. People are feeling increasingly powerless.

"The Hawke Government is taking Labor very much to the Right, trying to govern in the interests of the employers, not the unions.

"The unions think they can rely on the good will of government, but they can't. The unions are becoming demoralised and demobilised.

"We are concerned about the unions, about what happens in the trade union movement."

Mr Percy — whose elder brother John, 38, has a black beard, wears glasses and is secretary of the Victorian branch of the party — is the son of an Australian-born publican at Cowra, NSW.

"I'm Aussie, all right," he said with a rare grin. "You can't take that away from me, even if I am alleged to be a GPU (Russian) or CIA (American) agent and the party to be financed by Moscow or Washington gold."

Mr Percy gave me a copy of the SWP statement on the NDP conference split.

The statement concluded: "The charge made against the SWP is a cover for the real reasons behind the walkout which include a difference over structure particularly whether the ranks and activists of the party should control their leaders or simply support actions taken by them.

"Members of the SWP will continue to campaign for nuclear disarmament and remain willing to work with anyone, including those who unfortunately decided to leave the NDP conference."

That wouldn't have been good TV any way.

This article appeared in the May 1, 1985, issue of the *Melbourne Sun*, a mass circulation daily published in Australia's second largest city.

depth of this error.

Our submission also pointed to "our strong opposition to the party's political support for the Croatian Movement for Statehood (HDP)."

We said at that time that our differences with the political course of the leadership majority were "deep and far-reaching," and we believed "that underlying these differences [was] a deepening ultraleft error that [placed] the party in an increasingly sectarian relationship to the real movement of the working class. The present National Executive," we said, had shown "the inability to allow for an objective assessment and discussion of these differences, let alone correcting errors which we believe will lead our party away from both revolutionary Marxism and the Fourth International."

Twelve months later, these and other political errors we noted have deepened dramatically.

At the 1979 World Congress, the Australian section supported the perspective of turning the sections of the FI into parties implanted in the industrial working class. Under pressure of difficult objective conditions and disappointment that this orientation did not lead to quick growth or a shortcut to influence in the trade union movement, and in the face of its unwillingness to meet the political challenges of the turn, the SWP leadership "solved" the problem by declaring the turn to industry "behind us." The new ultraleft trade union election strategy adopted at the January 1983 conference meant the SWP leadership's conscious reversal of the turn.

This reinterpretation of the line of the 1979 World Congress has now been codified in the leadership's most recent public draft resolution, "The Struggle for Socialism in the Imperialist Epoch." It marks the complete abandonment of the political perspectives of the turn towards the industrial working class.

In abandoning the tactic of critical support for the election of the ALP, the SWP leadership has provided no alternative perspective needed to advance the working class struggle for political power. Instead they now chase after the multi-class election campaigns of an array of peace and environment groups whose trajectory is openly anti-Labor.

Justifying these new electoral alliances on the basis of policies rather than the class forces they represent demonstrates the SWP leadership's electoralism and its clear loss of class bearings. This new political support for the Green and nuclear disarmament candidates and the dropping of a call for a Labor victory in the December 1984 Federal elections follow the political support given to the Moscow-line Socialist Party of Australia over the ALP in recent state and by-elections. This electoral support for the SPA's "class struggle program" was part of an unprincipled manoeuvre towards this Stalinist sect. This has since lost momentum. As part of the SWP's regroupment orientation, it has rejected the name and heritage of Trotskyism, contending that the term "Stalinism" has been a "barrier" to recognising the "positive achievements of the Com-

munist Parties." (*Direct Action* No. 500)

All these superficial lurches towards new "opportunities" reflect a deepening sectarianism to the mass working class organisations in this country. Ironically, these new moves are sold to the membership as a break away from sectarianism.

To begin to reverse this erroneous political direction it is necessary to overturn the factional expulsions of last year by restoring to membership of the SWP the four undersigned expellees and all those who resigned in protest at the witchhunt in the party and who are now part of our current in support of the Fourth International. Such reintegration would, in our opinion, involve national committee representation and complete tendency/faction rights to conduct in the SWP the political discussion that is rightfully the property of the whole organisation, but which was arbitrarily cut off by

the undemocratic expulsions last year.

It is our view that all supporters of the Fourth International in Australia should be in the same organisation.

In the absence of a reversal of the SWP leadership's course of splitting the Fourth International in Australia, we will continue to organise ourselves as a political current in solidarity with the Fourth International, and will appeal to the World Congress of the FI.

In the circumstance of our appeal being rejected, we expect that there will be opportunities for united work between our current and the SWP, wherever there is sufficient agreement for joint action, as for instance may arise in Central American solidarity work. Another possible avenue would be jointly promoting visits by Fourth International representatives. For our part we will attempt to advance such unity in action wherever possible. □

'Mass activism' is key

Review honors Australian Stalinists of 1930s

By Frances Collins

[The following film review appeared in the June 19 issue of *Direct Action*, under the headline, "Red Matildas."]

* * *

Red Matildas — Women, Peace and Politics in the Great Depression.

Written, directed, and produced by Sharon Conolly and Trevor Graham.

50 minutes. 16 mm color.

Available from Ronin Films, PO Box 1005 Civic Square, ACT 2608.

Red Matildas is a film about three women who joined the Communist Party of Australia during the depression years. It gives a vivid and fascinating picture of their experiences and of the social upheavals of the period.

One impression left by this film is the strength and nature of the party the women joined — very different to the CPA of today.

Of the three women — Audrey Blake, Joan Goodwin, and May Pennefather — only Goodwin is still an active member of the CPA, although Blake and Pennefather are involved in broader mass movements.

May Pennefather, born in 1909 in Perth, trained as a midwife at Crown Street Women's Hospital in Sydney when the course required nine months' work for no pay. Her work as a midwife at the Lidcombe Hospital brought her into contact with the hardship of many working-class families in inner Sydney suburbs.

Throughout the film, historical footage brings the women's stories to life. The dole queues, huge demonstrations of the unemployed, and the hardship of the women who struggled to keep families together through times of over 28 per cent unemployment marked the years in which these women became politically active.

A scene of Labor Prime Minister Jim Scullin

calling for equality of sacrifice to meet those difficult times as the unemployed marched through the street demanding food and work, reminds the viewer of Bob Hawke today, exhorting "all Australians" to tighten their belts. The degree of suffering and the level of unemployment are not as extreme today but the message is the same.

Pennefather was one of four Australian women who volunteered as nurses for the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. She worked in Spain for two years, in conditions of extreme hardship. Shifts of 48 hours were the norm.

Pennefather tells how she learned to snatch a few winks by leaning against a wall during operations in between requests from the doctors for implements. After two months in England to restore her health, Pennefather returned to Spain for another eight months up to the end of the war.

The Spanish Civil War, building support for it in Australia, and the impact of the defeat of the antifascist forces on CPA members are important themes throughout Red Matildas. Blake and Goodwin very movingly describe just what it was like to live through that crushing defeat.

Footage from Spain — the bombing of a town, news clips describing the advance of General Franco's fascist troops, along with those showing famous woman republican leader La Passionara, telling people it is better to die on your feet than live on your knees, help to recreate this piece of history as people lived and felt it.

Joan Goodwin joined the CPA after completing an Arts degree at Melbourne University where she had been active in the Labor club. Unable to find work she became active in the unemployed movement and the CPA.

Although her family was not well off, they

were opposed to her left-wing activism. Goodwin recalls with humor the night she had to attend a political meeting in a blue evening gown so her parents would not know where she was going.

As political activists, all three broke many of the conventions which defined women's role at the time. The strength of their convictions and their personal courage led them to defy pressures from the home and from employers to conform.

Moscow Youth Festival

Australian SWP delegate returns with glowing report

By Margo Condoleon

[The following article appeared in the August 28 issue of *Direct Action* under the headline, "Internationalism rules at World Youth Festival." The author is a leader of Resistance, the youth organization of the Australian Socialist Workers Party.]

* * *

As I arrived at Moscow's airport with the 60 other Australian delegates an enormous banner caught our eye: "Welcome to the delegates of the 12th World Festival of Youth and Students." It brought home the importance that the Soviet Union was placing on this gathering of 40,000 delegates from more than 150 countries.

From the buses on our way in from the airport, Moscow looked surprisingly like any other big city, except for one thing. The entire route was lined with banners in the festival colors, carrying the main slogan: "For anti-imperialist solidarity, peace, and friendship."

Even before the festival began, we found we were being treated as honored guests. Lodged in Moscow's 40 largest hotels, with buses provided, we had the run of the city's facilities, with tours to the city's cultural and entertainment landmarks.

July 27, the opening day, was unforgettable. Ten members of each delegation took part in a four kilometre march. From the beginning to its end at the Lenin Stadium, Soviet people lined the route of the march cheering and expressing their solidarity with the many countries and struggles represented.

At Lenin Stadium 100,000 watched an opening march of 50 members from each delegation showing the scope and internationalism of the festival.

The air was filled with banners and flags of struggle, dancing, chanting and singing, and fists raised high. Delegations took much longer than expected to get through the stadium.

Standing ovation for Nicaragua

Not that anyone minded. This clearly wasn't just a ceremony. It was a festival with a message to the world which came across loud and clear: the fight for peace is a fight against imperialism, and young people are among the

Audrey Blake, author of the book *A Proletarian Life*, was a prominent leader of the CPA youth organisation when it was most successful. At the end of the film she calls on this generation of activists to keep fighting.

The last generation won their victory by helping to end the US-Australian war against Vietnam. Mass activism like that of the '30s and the '60s can win radical victories for the mass of people whose only power is their numbers. □

most uncompromising fighters in this struggle.

In the opening ceremony, this was expressed most vividly in the audience's response to many of the delegations. They gave a standing ovation to young people straight from the war zones of Nicaragua, from Cuba, Vietnam, and African nations, and from all those countries or movements engaged in a daily struggle against imperialism.

The delegations from other countries were quite unlike the regular representation found at large international gatherings. For example, Aborigines with their flag led the Australian delegation around the stadium.

Likewise the New Zealand delegation marched behind an enormous banner proclaiming Aotearoa, the name of the Maori nation.

After this, thousands of young people gave performances similarly reflecting the themes of peace and anti-imperialist solidarity. In a spectacular finale thousands of doves were released.

The Soviet understanding of the importance of the festival and its central theme culminated in Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov's opening address.

This came as a surprise to us. The Australian government, by contrast, had showed not the slightest bit of interest in promoting the festival.

The scope and depth of the festival's program are difficult to describe.

There were no less than 15 different centres organised around different themes operating concurrently for the next seven days. These ranged from anti-imperialist solidarity to peace and disarmament, young women, students, young workers, and even sport and tourism.

Wide range of activities

All the centres had their own programs of discussions, rallies, conferences, workshops, and round table discussions, with many sessions running at the same time. Each day was organised around a different broad issue of concern to youth.

As well, other actions and forums were organised. These included outdoor rallies in solidarity with different struggles around the world.

An anti-imperialist tribunal presented testimony of witnesses to the impact of im-

perialism on their countries.

Alongside this ran an extensive cultural program from early in the morning till late at night.

And in addition to all the organised activities, we had the memorable experience of meeting activists and revolutionaries from all parts of the world.

The most memorable of these for me was our meeting with the Vietnamese delegation. In addition to their warm hospitality, despite the enormous obstacles faced in that country's reconstruction program they had nothing but confidence in the goals and direction their country was taking.

Meeting of Pacific delegates

We were also free to organise and participate in other meetings and discussions. Delegates from the countries of the Pacific organised one such meeting.

This meeting set out to establish the common issues and concerns of the peoples of the region. Overwhelmingly these were the struggle for self-determination by those oppressed by imperialism and expansionism and, linked to this, the growing nuclearisation of the region.

A statement from the meeting pointed out that the Pacific is a region with its own identity and a need for international solidarity with its struggles.

Formal meetings aside, the opportunities to meet and discuss with others was limited only by the number of hours in the day. We met new people from all over the world at the centres during the day and the festival clubs at night. Every night, going to sleep had to be weighed up against what you'd miss out on or who you wouldn't meet as a result. There were some pretty tired people in Moscow by the end of the eight days.

And it seemed that the whole of Moscow wanted to be part of it. No matter where you were or what time it was, if you looked like a festival delegate, you were constantly stopped by local citizens wanting to know where you were from, offering assistance, or wanting to exchange gifts.

One big international party

Every night, all night, Red Square would come alive as thousands of local people took to the streets with festival participants in one big international party.

The eight days just vanished. As our bus queued to get into the Lenin Stadium, many of us thought that the closing ceremony would be a let down, that nothing could match what we'd already experienced.

But it was spectacular in every possible way. The theme, the quality of the performances, and especially the international solidarity it expressed made it a high point of the festival. Leaving that stadium I was just one of thousands more determined than ever to return home and build anti-imperialist solidarity, peace, and friendship. □