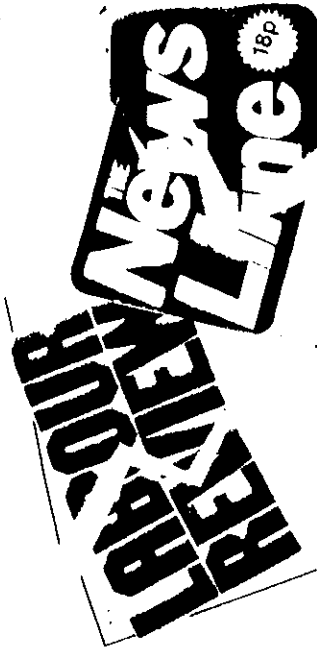


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Articles by

WORKERS POWER

CRISIS IN THE W.R.P.

THE POLITICAL ROOTS OF THE SPLIT IN THE WRP.

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Cliff Slaughter and the present leadership of the WRP date the degeneration within the SLL/WRP to the 1970s. Its political roots lie far deeper and further back in time (as does Healy's violations of democracy and revolutionary morality). They date to the disintegration of British and International Trotskyism in the years 1946 - 53. They lie in confusion over perspective, in revision of the Transitional Programme and abandonment of Leninist norms of organisation. WORKERS POWER reprints the following extracts and reprints to aid the discovery of the whole truth by members of the WRP.

THE COLLAPSE OF BRITISH TROTSKYISM AFTER THE WAR

This article in our series on the tactic of "entryism", looks at the role that the misapplication of this tactic played in the collapse of British Trotskyism in the 1940s. This period of British Trotskyism is an underexplored one. Leaders of left groups today like Ted Grant of the Militant, Tony Cliff of the SWP and Gerry Healy of the WRP, have more interest in obscuring the history of this period, in which they were participants, than in shedding any instructive light upon it. Their mistakes of this period are crucial in understanding how and why British Trotskyism got shattered into a host of centrist fragments. To admit these mistakes would mean admitting a departure from revolutionary communism - hence the silence of Grant, Cliff and Healy.

The mistaken method developed in 1945-51, a period of Labour government, over the question of "entryism", is being repeated by centrist organisations today. "Socialist Organiser" and "Socialist Action" are in the forefront of this process. Whether or not they admit it, their attitude to the Labour Left, their abandonment of fundamental revolutionary positions and their fantasies about the "evolution" of a "hard" reformist "left", have precedents in the 1945-51 period of British, and eventually, international Trotskyism.

In our view this period saw a qualitative degeneration of Trotskyism into centrism. On the question of strategy and tactics with regard to the Labour Party, the co-sponsors of the centrist revision of Trotskyism were Thomas Gerard Healy (Gerry Healy) and Michel Raptis (Pablo). The former was leader of the Minority Faction of the Revolutionary Communist Party (British Section of the Fourth International); the latter was Secretary of the FI itself. Though history was to cast Pablo in the role of the great Satan of Revisionism and Healy as the patron saint of "Anti-Pabloism", in the key period which prepared and executed the centrist liquidation of Trotsky's programme, they were close allies - who moreover had the 100% support of Jim Cannon of the American Socialist Workers Party, the other main figure in world Trotskyism.

We will follow this article with a further one on the practice of Healy's group during the "Socialist Outlook" venture, from 1948 to 1954. This period, following the collapse of British Trotskyism, provided irrefutable evidence of the centrist practice of the Healy group.

THE ENORMOUS SOCIAL weight of reformism in Britain has proved a tremendously disorienting factor for revolutionaries. Among British Trotskyists, as with their predecessors in the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF) and the British Communist Party, the great strength of Labourism produced huge pressures toward either sectarian isolation or opportunist liquidation. The question of the Labour Party exercised a central influence in the early days of British Trotskyism.

Between 1934 and 1936 splits over work in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) or the Labour Party (LP) completely derailed the movement. From 1936 - 39 there were at one moment or another at least ten "Trotskyist" groupings in Britain. Where more than personal intrigue was involved, the Labour Party question was usually at the heart of differences.

The "Peace and Unity" Conference of 1938 centered on Labour Party and ILP perspectives. The immediate collapse of the resultant Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) - official section of the Fourth International (FI) - partly stemmed from unresolved differences on this score.

The 1944 Fusion Conference which produced the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) was deeply divided over the question and the party was to remain so. The majority reporter to the 1946 National Conference complained of: "the tremendous energy which has been consumed by the Party, and which partly consumes the Party, in the factional struggle especially insofar as it related to the question of entry or non-entry into the Labour Party." (Special International Bulletin Sept. 46).

The fusion which produced the RCP was a move of great promise, bringing together delegates representing some 490 members. Whilst this figure was an overestimate, as was later recognised (the figure being nearer 350), the RCP had a solidly proletarian class composition, and was well-rooted in the trade unions. Unlike the European sections the RCP had not been the victim of massive repression; its cadre was intact.

Yet none of this was to save the RCP from political collapse over the following five years. In part this was due to building on insecure foundations. Despite the historical differences over the entry question a veil was drawn over the experience and therefore over the political lessons of the preceding ten years. The fusion conference agreed not "to open up old wounds and go over sterile discussions of the past which can have value only for the archive rat or the historian of the future, but which would only introduce the antagonisms of the past into the fused party, and therefore be a godsend to the professional faction fighter."

Such agreements to disagree have been a hall-mark of unifications throughout the last 30 years of British "Trotskyism". They amount to a decision not to decide on crucial tactical questions - usually on the pretext that "only tactics" are involved. Yet political life has yet to produce a way of carrying out a strategy except by means of tactics. Since fighting reformism in Britain at least - is a central question, the tactical questions cannot be left aside.

Tactics can be applied in either a principled or an unprincipled fashion. If the latter is the case then they corrupt and disintegrate the revolutionary strategy of which they are a part. Thus strategy and tactics do not inhabit separate realms - indeed consigning them to mutual isolation is the first sign of centrism. How this disease destroyed British Trotskyism is integrally linked to a parallel process within the Fourth International as a whole. Indeed in some respects the British experience pre-figured the issues and events of the great schism of 1961 to 1963 when the Fourth International split in two.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL

An important preparatory stage in the centrist degeneration of the FI took place in its process of reconstruction after the war. Between 1944 and 1948 it raised a correct, indeed courageous, revolutionary programme for Europe in the aftermath of the Imperialist War. However, the work of its conferences and Congresses (European Conference 1944,

Pre-Conference 1946, Second Congress 1948), on the question of perspective fell decisively below its programmatic and tactical positions. The FI's strength in the latter lay in its firm adherence to Trotsky's positions. Yet, paradoxically, a similar fidelity to Trotsky's 1938-40 perspectives and prognoses led to serious problems.

Trotsky's perspective in 1938/40 was one of war and revolution as immediate prospects. He correctly foresaw the catastrophic effects of the war on both the capitalist states and on the USSR. He considered that the Kremlin bureaucracy and its totalitarian apparatus would break up under the blows of the war; that rotten to the core bourgeois democracy would collapse, bringing down with it the reformist parties and trade unions. These, threatened or realised catastrophes would open up the necessity and possibility of the FI assuming revolutionary leadership of the masses during and after the war.

Of course this was not a "prediction" like a horoscope. Above all it was not a description of a process which would happen regardless of the existence or actions of the revolutionary party. In 1940 Trotsky wrote that: "The capitalist world has no way out unless a prolonged death agony is so considered. It is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades, of war, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, new wars, and new uprisings... The question of tempos and time intervals is of enormous importance; but it alters neither the general historical perspective nor the direction of our policy". He concluded that "the great historical problem will not be solved in any case until a revolutionary party stands at the

head of the proletariat" and that the FI's task to this end was to educate and organise the proletarian vanguard.

Taken in epochal terms Trotsky's perspective and strategic conclusions were correct. Stated thus at the beginning of a world war, they were a justifiable perspective full of revolutionary optimism and will. However, as Trotsky pointed out in the same document: "What characterises a genuine revolutionary organisation is above all the seriousness with which it works out and tests its political line at each new test of events".

The Fourth International however clung to the validity of Trotsky's perspective well beyond the end of the war. The failure of a revolutionary situation to materialise in an exhausted, occupied and divided Germany, where the remaining prestige of Social Democracy and Stalinism were thrown into the scales to support the huge armies of the occupying powers, seriously undermined the projected revolution. The prestige of Italian and French stalinism gained both by the partisan's fight against the Nazis and the victory of the Red Army, headed off revolutionary situations in both of these countries. In Britain and the USA, no pre-revolutionary crises comparable to the post-1918 situation emerged. In 1918-25 in Britain, 192,250,000 days were lost through strike action. In 1945-51 the figure was 14,250,000. In the USA there was a massive strike wave but it was under constant bureaucratic control, and achieved economic concessions but resulted in the passing of harsh anti-union laws like the Taft-Hartley Act. Clearly by 1947, no revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation existed in the principle imperialist countries.

The leaders of the FI, and especially its Secretariat members Pablo and E. Germain (Mandel), clung remorselessly to Trotsky's perspective of economic crisis and stagnation despite these developments. They linked to it a perspective of revolution. The 1946 document "The New Imperialist Peace and the Building of Parties of the FI" stated these erroneous views unequivocally: "The war has aggravated the disorganisation of capitalist economy and has destroyed the last possibilities of a relatively stable equilibrium in social and international relations... If the war did not immediately create in Europe a revolutionary upsurge of the scope and tempo we anticipated, it is nevertheless undeniable that it destroyed capitalist equilibrium on a world scale, thus opening up a long revolutionary period".

These formulations were in stark contrast to Trotsky's warnings to differentiate between different situations and periods, and to orient the programme accordingly. The longer the crisis and the revolutionary period extended without producing real crises or revolutions, the more Pablo and Mandel emptied these terms of any specific concrete content. "Crisis" they

turned into an epochal ever-present phenomenon. "Revolution" became a process whose protagonists became "forces", "currents" and "tendencies", rather than parties grouped around programmes. The precision of definite revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situations, of parties, leaderships, programmes, were dissolved in the name of fidelity to Trotsky's perspectives.

By 1950 Pablo extended this method into a new perspective of war-revolution; of centrist tendencies roughly adequate to revolutionary tasks. If the implementation of these positions only began in 1952 on an international scale, the forging of the underlying method took place in the earlier period. With Healy as his loyal local representative, Pablo discovered in Britain a "pre-revolutionary crisis"; a centrist current (Bevanism); a new tactic, total entry for a long period; a new programme - "transitional demands to mobilise thousands"; a new vehicle for revolution - the Labour Party, suitably transformed.

PABLO'S "NEW TYPE" ENTRYISM

Thus in February 1952 Michel Pablo, Secretary of the Fourth International, in introducing his "special type" entryism pointed to the pilot-run entryism of the British and Austrian sections. He notes that in the period 1944-47 the work of the International was one of "essentially independent work". This work was, in Pablo's view, based on a perspective of "the masses deserting the old reformist parties" and "disillusioned with Stalinism. Here he remarks that England and Austria were "special cases" and "did not fail to attract the attention of the International". For Pablo this work prefigured his later tactics (entryism sui generis - entryism of a special type): "...in the entry into the Labour Party the International embarked on the course of long-term work within these movements and organisations through which flow - and most probably will flow for another period - the fundamental political current of the class." (Entryism of a Special Type: International Secretariat Documents Vol.1 p 32)

Pablo's conception of longterm entry was based on a definite perspective that he advanced at the time. "The essential forces of the revolutionary party would appear through differentiation or explosion in these mass organisations. This tactical conception was and is based of course on the perspective of the evolution of the international situation as they began

to be clarified for us at the beginning of the 'cold war'; the relatively short period before the war break out; the new and decisive character of this war; the accelerated crisis of the capitalist regime which will in any case acquire a generally explosive character in the war itself."

Pablo's perspective was false on every count. The "cold war" was a retrenchment of the spheres of influence agreed at Yalta and Potsdam with conflict only in the areas where no agreement existed. Given the resolution of the inter-imperialist contradictions, the massive destruction of productive forces in Europe and the uncontested economic hegemony of the USA (dissolution of the French and British colonial empires and their transference to the status of US semi-colonies) the likelihood, let alone the probability of a new world war was a thoroughly false basis for a perspective. Certainly Marxists could not easily "predict" the long boom that lay ahead but to stake all, and to revise fundamental principles in the operation of crucial tactics (entryism) on such undialectical schema-mongering led straight to disaster. From this false perspective, and using the same method with which he had elaborated it, Pablo predicted a "process of differentiation" within the social-democratic and Stalinist parties. Since these parties "cannot be smashed and replaced by others in the relatively short time between now and the decisive conflict" they must be transformed by differentiation. This itself would take place by stages; first "Bevanism", and then at a later stage a "genuine revolutionary tendency". But the latter stage lies at a distance whose arrival cannot be foreseen. Therefore "it will first be necessary to go through the experience (of Bevanism - WP) by penetrating it and helping it from the inside to develop its last resources and consequences."

This is the basis of entryism of a "different kind from the entryism practised before the war", one based on a desire "from the inside of these tendencies

to amplify and accelerate their left centrist ripening". In this process the Trotskyists were to compete for leadership of these centrist tendencies. Gone was the fight for a revolutionary tendency, able and willing to criticise and expose all shades of centrism and reformism. Gone was Trotsky's specific, concrete perspectives and the principled entry tactics appropriate to them.

THE ROAD TO RUIN FOR THE R.C.P.

Pablo's entrism sui generis produced an "explosion and a differentiation" all right - but it was within the ranks of the FI not those of the social democrats and stalinists. Alas this differentiation did not go to the roots of the matter because the leaders of the "Anti-Pabloite" forces, particularly Cannon and Healy were thoroughly embroiled in the pioneering case of British Labour Party entry. It was only when the "special entry" was applied to Stalinism at the height of the Cold War, that, belatedly, Pablo's tactics were discovered to be liquidationist.

Yet Healy - with Cannon's blessing - had waged a four year struggle to destroy the RCP and develop precisely the fundamentals of "Pablo's method". Cannon in 1953, looked back on this period: "The whole Haston (leader of the RCP - WP) system had to be blown up before a genuine Trotskyist organisation

could get started in England.....If one were to undertake to write the real history of British Trotskyism, he would have to set the starting point as the day and date on which your group finally tore itself loose from the Haston regime and started its own independent work". (Trotskyism versus Revisionism, Vol. 1, p.262)

What was this splendid struggle in which Cannon acted as midwife at the birth of British Trotskyism? The fact that this lusty infant turned out to be Healyism should give us pause.

The first majority Labour Government was elected in a landslide victory in July 1945. 48% of the vote had given it 393 seats, 146 more than the combined opposition. The British working class expressed its desire for fundamental change, its desire not to return to the dole queues of the thirties in a massive electoral show of strength but one that had little or no counterpart in direct action in the factories and streets. In the first 15 months after World War 2 there were 12 times fewer strikes than in 1918-1919.

Labour's 1945 programme declared that the "Labour Party is a Socialist Party and Proud of it" but its programme in general reflected the social and political consensus of the leaders of the wartime coalition. There was a Liberal-Tory-Labour agreement on such things as full employment and social security and a national health service. These were the first priorities of the Labour administration. Its nationalisation programme for the coal, electricity and gas industries reflected the ruling class' willingness to extend the advantages of state capitalism (learned during the war) to the loss making industries and public utilities.

It was in this context that the RCP leadership around Jock Haston and Ted Grant tried to orient the group. Fraction work had been carried out in the ILP by the Trotskyists since 1940 when there was a marked turn to the left in repulsion from the Coalition. For a short while the ILP even tried to intervene in industrial disputes. However, the RCP (and the WIL/RSL before 1944) intervened as a serious independent force in the industrial disputes with the much stronger CP scabbing on them all. The Tynesida Apprentices strike was, perhaps, their greatest success.

In 1945 and 1946 Haston and Grant turned more of their resources away from the ILP towards the LP whose grass root organs were beginning to come alive again in the wake of the election. There was a steady increase in individual membership and trade union affiliations but their activity remained within the bounds of those of an electoral machine. At the time the Labour League of Youth was much smaller than the CP's youth organisation. At the peak of the fraction work the RCP, in 1946, had 20% of its members (66) operating in 46 wards. In this work they were guided by Trotsky's advice in 1934 when he said: "Alongside independent propaganda work, all

means must be employed - always in keeping with the concrete situation - to link up with the masses, push them forward, and consolidate new revolutionary cadres from their ranks. Above all this includes i) Systematic fraction work in the trade unions under the slogan of trade unity. The opportunity to reach and influence worker masses is better here than in any party.....ii) Systematic fraction work in all workers' parties and organisations, not just by forming fractions out of sympathisers already present there but also by sending in really solid elements." (Tasks of the ICL, Writings, 1934-35).

There was clearly not a situation in any way comparable to the mid-30s in France (see WP newspaper no.37) in which total entry of the Trotskyist forces was both necessary and justified.

Major strikes did occur in 1945-6 particularly in the Docks and Transport but the RCP was able to relate to these independently on its own programme. There was no evidence that these struggles had any major effect within the Labour Party. A balance sheet of the RCP's LP fraction work during these strikes was revealing: "Despite the fact that the majority of the transport strikers lived in the North and North-East district of London, and through their trade unions, are affiliated members of the Labour Party, it has not been reported that one single deputation approached the dozens of Labour Parties in the area...The strikers did not attend the LP meetings to seek solidarity and bring pressure to bear on the Government."

With this tactical perspective the RCP leadership sought to pursue its independent activity. It had campaigned in the General Election for "Break the Coalition: Labour to Power" and advanced a series of demands focused towards workers' control. Given the nationalisation programme of the Labour Party and the belief of workers in the socialist character of these measures, it was a correct emphasis. In the Municipal Elections later in 1945 the RCP stood its own candidate in Newcastle. In their manifesto there was a sharp differentiation between Labourism and Trotskyism that was to be absent in Healy four years later:

"The Labour Party is not a socialist party...but a party of capitalism. It is nevertheless a workers' party and is based in the unions...and we will unite with the Labour Party to defeat the representatives of capital. But we do not think, nor have we ever said, that the Labour Party is capable, or even wants to, carry out this policy of ending capitalism and introducing socialism".

Labour's colonial policy is attacked and the following demands outlined: "No compensation to pit owners, operate the pits under the control of workers and technicians committees."

"No compensation to Bankers."
"Operate a sliding-scale of working hours without reduction of wages."
"Open the closed plants".
"Committees of housewives, co-ops, small shopkeepers and workers in the distributive trades to oversee rationing."

Although the manifesto is weak in not clearly stating its position on the question of government and parliament, its transitional demands are backed by the call for independent struggle to achieve them.

Gerry Healy did not take up an oppositional position on these questions prior to the Labour Government's election. He voted for the majority resolution on Labour Party work at the fusion conference, which outlined the need for fraction work. However Healy, unlike the Haston-Grant majority, wholeheartedly agreed with the International Secretariat of the Fourth International's (ISFI's) 1944 International Conference Theses on International Perspectives which argued that: "The revival of economic activity in capitalist countries weakened by the war...will be characterised by an especially slow tempo which will keep their economy at levels bordering on stagnation and slump."

This perspective was to be refuted by the developments which took place after 1945 in Europe. The war itself had created new conditions for an upturn. The enormous productive capacity of US imperialism, undamaged by the effects of war, together with a chronic shortage of goods in devastated Europe, combined to ensure relative stability. Already by 1946 industrial output had exceeded pre-war levels and was

rising rapidly. Capital investment far exceeded the inter-war high by 1946. Pablo and Healy held rigidly to this perspective basing a schematic, dogmatic political strategy on it. There would be an inevitable clash between workers compelled to defend their living standards in slump conditions, and the Labour leaders which would be a "crystallisation of a left-wing". Based on the Labour Party's "unique" relationship to the unions, this radicalisation would "inevitably" make itself felt in the Party. This therefore, was the rationale for total entry. Healy argued in 1945: "The turn to independent work could only be a temporary phase until the Labour Party sprang to life once again."

Attacked by the majority of the RCP and unable to adduce any concrete evidence of a centrist development in the Labour Party, Healy soon gave up this whole approach. Instead his justification became thoroughly opportunist. For Healy the "dangers" of fraction work were hammered home by the expulsion of leading RCP members from the Newcastle ILP in 1945 on the charge of "Trotskyism". McNair, the ILP leader responsible was, as it so happened, a very close friend of none other than Marceau Pivert. Healy's reaction to these expulsions paralleled Molinier and Frank tactics when faced with the expulsion of the Trotskyists from the SFIO in 1935. (See WP newspaper 3B). He wanted at all costs to avoid a "provocation". Healy believed that the real problem with fraction work was it presupposed an independent party. This, he argued, would leave them open to the charge that they were not "sincere". It also allowed ammunition for the bureaucracy. Therefore, he concluded, only total entry would avoid the problem. Healy scoffed at the RCP leaders for believing that: "whilst maintaining that 'independent' Party it will be possible to work in these organisations with the object of winning comrades over to the outside party, thereby laying the basis for the mass party at some future date. The conception is entirely erroneous."

One of the failures of both sides in the faction fight was that the programmatic significance of the entry tactic received virtually no consideration. The debate revolved primarily around organisational questions, namely, what proportion of RCP members to devote to Labour Party work. But on what programme was that work to be conducted? The leadership never spelled out any separate programme for entry because they doubtless assumed that existing RCP politics would be the basis of LP work under all conditions. But no such implication could be assumed from the ISFI or Healy. In a debate over entry work in the ILP, Sam Gordon, the official ISFI representative (and Cannon's confidant) in Britain argued: "The programme is not at issue. With minor concessions the basic position of the FI is already acceptable to the native left-wing."

Pablo and the ISFI intensified their support for Healy. The June 1946 Plenum of the ISFI passed a resolution on tactics in Britain. It was rejected by the RCP leaders. In January 1947 Pablo again insisted on total entry. The opportunism behind Healy and Pablo's motivation deepened. They reiterated the slump-crisis perspective as an immediate threat: "the death agony of capitalism is an ever-present factor in the world now, in the very midst of the conjunctural revival." The 1946 upturn was a "revival without any perspective of real stability".

Driven by the logic of his polemic Pablo began to revise the entry tactic of Trotsky: "Under these circumstances the question of entry takes on an entirely new aspect from previous times, it seems to us. Whereas previously the entry of revolutionists into the LP of necessity had more circumscribed and limited objectives - the winning over of relatively restricted layers of advanced workers to the programme of Trotskyism....the present situation sets new objectives for entry: the setting into motion of the entire awakened British working class along the path of revolutionary action, this time within the framework of the Labour Party itself."

By 1947 there was no longer any pretence of relating to any existing centrist current as in the 1930s. Rather the task was to "anticipate" it by capturing key leadership positions in the local Labour Parties so as to be there when the centrist current emerged. Pablo himself wrote testily to the RCP leaders explain-

ning this in June 1947: ("It is High Time to Find a Solution") "The whole problem for the British Trotskyists consists in entering now into the Labour Party armed with this perspective without waiting for the Left-Wing to crystallise around centrist leaders or a centrist platform."

Six months earlier the International Secretariat had made the implications of this clear: "Entry into the Labour Party today therefore signifies for the Trotskyists a campaign of relatively long duration." Thus Pablo and Healy completely revised the whole political method that Trotsky had applied to entry tactics before the war. For Trotsky fraction work in the social-democratic and Stalinist parties was a norm as long as they contained serious working class forces. Total entry, of necessity, could not be predicated on a long term perspective.

The party exists to defend and fight for the programme. Its formal independence could only be abandoned therefore if it could be replaced by a revolutionary fraction or tendency etc within the mass reformist parties. This would only be possible in periods when the reformist masses were sufficiently radicalised to defend the revolutionaries and the reformist leaders were driven to adopt centrist camouflage. However for Trotsky the revolutionaries should not tailor their programme, the tactics they advanced for the class or their criticism of the reformist leaders of the left and right. For him there could be no question of making the object of the entry tactic staying in the reformist party for any particular length of time. To do so implicitly builds into the perspective the surrender of revolutionary positions for a centrist or even left-reformist disguise. Although at first Pablo and Healy talked of mobilising thousands around transitional demands, in fact that they counterposed to this "the winning over of individuals here and there to the full programme of Trotskyism." This was the shape of things to come. In fact Pablo and Healy confused the tactic of the united front on certain immediate and transitional demands with the building of a revolutionary party or tendency.

The RCP majority resolutely refused to accept the entry tactic so at the end of 1947 Pablo and the ISFI split the RCP, allowing Healy to enter and pursue his tactic as he saw fit. This was to open a process which effectively destroyed the RCP, the only sizeable unified Trotskyist organisation there has been in Britain.

Less than two years after the split the majority of the RCP themselves decided to enter the Labour Party and join Healy. What led to this abrupt collapse? Was it in fact the impossibility of doing independent work with a grouping of a few hundred? One factor in the demoralisation of the Haston-Grant leadership was that from 1948 onwards there was a narrowing of the differences over economic perspectives. The RCP majority had never denied the slump perspective, but refused to accept it as an immediate prospect between 1944 and 1947. At the end of 1946 the RCP majority replied to the International Secretariat: "How long can this upward swing last? Certainly not for longer than a few years at the most. Far from the Revolutionary Communists of Britain pushing this overriding factor of decline into the background...our whole activity and orientation is based precisely on this factor. In the resolution of the RCP...we emphasise that: 'the orientation and strategy of the RCP is firmly based on the longterm perspective of crisis and decline.'" (Original emphasis.)

On this basis Haston and Grant did not of course exclude the possibility of total entry. This was always written into the resolutions.

From the end of 1947 the economic situation of the working class took a serious turn for the worse. During the 1947/8 winter an austerity programme was introduced by the Labour government, designed to squeeze domestic consumption and boost exports. The Miners' working week was extended by 2½ hrs. Food imports were reduced; rationing extended to petrol and meat and there were increases in direct and indirect taxes. In 1949 there was £250 million of spending cuts.

The prosecution of this austerity programme was to lead to the eventual resignation of Aneurin Bevan from the cabinet in 1951. Meanwhile the RCP itself stagnated. The Haston-Grant majority had expected growth from open work and an orientation to industry. Between 1945 and 1947 they could point to

steady escalation of strikes, to a peak of 2½ million days lost. But after 1947 there was a steady dissipation of industrial action. In 1950 there were only 1½ million days lost in strikes.

On the other side, the steady escalation of individual membership of the Labour Party (rising from 0.6 million in 1947 to 1 million in 1952) and jump in trade union affiliation to the Labour Party (after the 1947 trade union reform abolished 'contracting-in') seemed to add weight to Healy's old positions. The RCP could not reconcile itself to return to the limitations of a propaganda group.

Since 1944 it had shared, with the whole FI, a perspective of a coming revolutionary crisis and consequent growth into a mass force. Whilst the RCP majority had resisted Pablo and Healy's schematism, they were not willing or perhaps able to thoroughly re-assess the perspectives or programme for the post-war Fourth International.

In 1948 a major programmatic revision occurred. Pablo gave the Yugoslav revolution and workers state a clean bill of health on the basis of the Tito-Stalin split. The Haston-Grant leadership violently protested but found no response in the International as a whole.

In March 1949 the block between Haston and Grant broke up. Grant argued that the RCP must face a period of "becoming more and more a propaganda group but with the possibility of intervening, and in certain circumstances playing a leading and active role in relation to certain disputes". Haston and Co could not face this retreat. However, their rejection of propaganda group existence was not in favour of revolutionary mass work. They argued for the closing down of "Socialist Appeal" (the RCP's paper) because it could not compete with the CP's Daily Worker. The left turn of the CP in the Haston group's view meant that "the prospect of creating, in the immediate period ahead, a third independent alternative party of the working class has been undermined".

Only a politically bankrupt tendency could show such defeatism. The central question of programme, of defending Trotskyist politics against Stalinism and Social Democracy was thus reduced to mere organisational fetishism - a danger that always lurked in their organisational conception of 'building the party'. The need to propagandise for revolutionary politics as the minimum necessary activity was thus abandoned.

By the time of the RCP's admission of political bankruptcy, Healy's grouping in the Labour Party had produced four issues of the centrist paper "Socialist Outlook". It had a growing circulation. The ISFI eagerly sanctioned a "re-fusion" of the groups in 1949, and as a reward for services rendered, Healy's faction, still the smaller, was given the majority positions in the leadership. Before a formal conference could take place in late 1950, Healy had used his position, and differences over the Korean War, to expel his erstwhile opponents. Grant was expelled. Haston left in complete political collapse. The conference never took place, and Healy reduced the now-dead RCP to a tiny conspiratorial cabal of a few dozen - "The Club", whose "Trotskyist" politics were shrouded in secrecy and available only to the privileged few, less they prove a "provocation" to the left-reformist allies in "Socialist Outlook".

The lessons of this period need to be carefully digested and understood by authentic Trotskyists today. Underpinning many of the arguments of both sides in the RCP debate was the question "to be in or not to be in?". Today's epigones of Trotsky in the Socialist League (ex IMG) and WSL still insist that is the question.

It isn't, and to pose it this way is to confess confusion at best and gross opportunism at worst. The whole experience points to the need to return to Trotsky's own advice on entryism.

Work by revolutionaries inside a reformist party is a means to winning adherents to communism. As such its programmatic basis (not its organisational execution) must come first. It did not do so in the period of the break up of the RCP, and it certainly isn't in evidence in the strategies advocated by the Socialist Challenge and the Socialist Organiser today. ■

by Keith Hassell and Dave Stocking

IN THE LAST issue of *Workers Power* (No. 39), we traced the factional struggle within the British Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) over entry into the Labour Party. On the one side, the majority around Jock Haston argued against total entry and for fraction work subordinated to "independent" RCP work around industrial struggles. Ranged against them were the combined forces of the RCP minority - led by Gerry Healy - and the International Secretariat leadership of Mandel and Pablo, who from 1945 onwards argued ever more stridently for total entry and the liquidation of any open party.

Despite their vastly more concrete grasp of conditions within the Labour Party and within the unions, the RCP majority had at least one fatal flaw, one that they shared with the Healy/IS opposition. It was this flaw that was to lead by 1949 to the destruction of the RCP and the disappearance of any public organ of "Trotskyism" for over eight years.

As we have demonstrated Healy and Pablo whilst having no grasp of Trotsky's critical analytical method, clung all the more rigidly to his political perspectives of the late 1930s. These envisaged enormous revolutionary upheavals as a result of the war; the death knell of Stalinism and social democracy and the transformation of the FI sections into mass parties. Disorientated by the falsification of these perspectives, yet deeply fearful of admitting this, the whole FI resorted increasingly to vulgar apologetics designed to preserve at all costs a perspective of revolution and a mass FI just around the corner. When the revolution failed to materialise and the Trotskyist groups stagnated and even declined, the FI leaders looked increasingly to false "perspectives" (catastrophic crisis, a third world war, etc) and to "new" tactics and new forces that would carry out the revolution.

Healy re-discovered Trotsky's advice to the British Trotskyists of the 1930s regarding the desirability of entry into the Labour Party and ripped it out of context. The "Inevitable" crisis and slump of British imperialism would galvanise and radicalise the British proletariat. The masses would "inevitably" express this radicalisation through the Labour Party. The task of Trotskyists was to "anticipate" this development, to capture leading positions in the Labour Party prior to this occurrence, and put the organisational loyalty of the working class to the Labour Party to good purpose by revealing one's "Trotskyism" at the right moment so as to direct the energy of the proletariat against capitalism itself.

Healy's catastrophism provided an apparently revolutionary cover for his opportunism. In 1945/1946 he insisted on cloaking his calls for dissolution of the RCP into the ILP with analogies drawn from the 1930s. He could joyfully quote Trotsky's advice in 1933 that: "If we only send part of our membership into the ILP and keep a public organ going outside of it then we are in danger of getting our members expelled from the ILP in a very short time."

Healy could use the 1945 ILP expulsions of RCP members in Newcastle as evidence of the truth of this. But Healy ignored the fact that Trotsky had based this tactical advice on the existence of a revolutionary majority in the "left centrist" ILP of 1933-5. This in his view justified total entry. Moreover, Trotsky demanded no restrictions on political discussion. But by 1945 the ILP had become what Trotsky knew it would if it was not won to the programme of the FI, "a formed, homogenous party with a stable apparatus." In which case Trotsky argued that "entry in it would not only be useless but fatal".

Trotsky drew this conclusion as early as 1936. Healy not only wanted to apply this method in 1945 but to transfer its application in 1946 to the Labour Party itself with its entrenched parliamentary and trade union bureaucracy.

Both factions in the RCP held to perspectives based on a rapid numerical growth of the party. The Haston-Grant majority saw the source of that in trade union work. The Healy minority saw its realisation as coming through the Labour Party. Both sides seriously mis-estimated the nature and tempo of the class struggles that were to produce increased recruitment. After the war RCP membership dropped each year, while no revolutionary struggles erupted. Indeed the onset of the Cold War and the witch hunting initiated by the Labour and Trade Union bureaucrats created, if anything, a democratic counter-revolutionary situation. The post-war series of state-capitalist nationalisations and social-welfare reforms ground to a halt. Working class resistance was limited to isolated union struggles against wage limits but the TUC-Labour Party bloc held firm against rank and file pressure. Full employment and social reforms proved a powerful base from which Bevin, Attlee and Morrison could isolate their Stalinist and Trotskyist opponents.

The Trotskyists undertook virtually no thorough-going perspectival and programmatic re-assessment other than the analysis of Eastern Europe. Other debates centered on tactical questions premised on a false understanding of the period that post-war Trotskyism confronted.

Healy's opportunist appetite with regard to the Labour Party stemmed from his impatience. His schematism, and denigration of propaganda tasks were evident as early as December 1945: "The high hopes entertained at the time of the conference in the future of open work, the glowing future for the independent Party depicted by so many speakers have not so far been realised, nor is there any significant pointer in this direction. The rate of growth of the RCP since the conference (only 4 months previously - WP) can do nothing but demonstrate the impotence of a small propaganda body to affect the vital course of the political struggle.

The tempo of events, rapid on a world scale, in this country still lags behind Europe and Asia, but this cannot last long...The already overburdened economy of Britain will collapse catastrophically and the Labour Party will be thrown into utter confusion."

AN OPPORTUNIST OUTLOOK

This outlook was in no sense based on the objective conditions of the time which had unavoidably marginalised the revolutionary communists. Formally it may appear similar to the revolutionary optimism of the Transitional Programme, but the period was completely changed by the very outcome of the war, the strengthening of Stalinism and social democracy. It was not the hall-mark of Trotsky to be forever predicting breakthroughs of the G Healy type. On the contrary, in October 1922 after the wave of revolutionary unrest in Europe had subsided Trotsky said of the British communists that they were "a successfully functional educational and propaganda society but not a party capable of directly leading the masses." And this was when the CPGB was ten times larger and more strategically implanted in the working class movement than the RCP!

The RCP majority, however, had no operative alternative to Healy's opportunism. The gradual foundering of their hopes for mass growth through the unions, appeared to confirm Healy's perspective as the correct one. By 1949 they were a spent force. The RCP's open paper "Socialist Appeal" disappeared and a clear field was left for Healy's centrist "Socialist Outlook" venture.

"Socialist Outlook" was launched in December 1948 as a 4-page monthly. Whilst still pursuing his faction fight against Haston and Grant, Healy insisted in self-protection that total entry into the Labour Party would nevertheless be to fight for the programme of the FI. But once the exigencies of factional in-fighting were over this pretence was rapidly dropped. "Socialist Outlook" described itself as "The Paper of Labour's Left-Wing." It was not a Trotskyist organ. Nor, within Healy's per-

spective could it be. Since a mass left-wing did not yet exist in the Labour Party, the role of the paper was to coax one into being. Such a current it was hoped would be a centrist one - at first. A centrist current therefore needed a centrist paper.

Healy convinced the Constructional Engineering Union (CSE) Secretary Jack Stanley to co-found the paper Healy, Stanley, John Lawrence ("Club" member) and later Tom Braddock, formed the Editorial Board. Braddock was a Labour MP until he lost his seat in the 1950 General Election. After that the NEC refused to endorse his candidature anywhere else because of this leftism and he became even more closely involved in "Socialist Outlook". Various left Labour MPs contributed to SO, several with definite pro-Stalinist leanings who could not be accommodated in the pages of the "neutralist" "Tribune".

No debates or features on the Fourth International were found in SO's pages. The politics of the paper reflected left-labourite concerns and the pro-Stalinist sympathies of people like Stanley and Braddock. This of course merged well with the pro-Stalinism of the Pablo FI after 1948. A year after the launch of SO, Ellis Smith MP and a core of SO writers took the initiative in launching the "Socialist Fellowship" (SF). SO was not the official paper of the SF, nor did Healy control it as he did in fact control the paper, but the Fellowship drew in "broader" forces. One hundred delegates from 29 towns attended the first conference and by mid-1950 it claimed 1,000 members. At the peak of its influence in early 1951 SO claimed to be selling 9-10,000 copies a month though Mark Jenkins' book "Bevanism" asserts that it was probably nearer 5,000.

HOPE THE LEFTS FIGHT

While SO itself had no programme the Fellowship advocated a left-reformist platform. The "Trotskyists" succeeded in getting a call for a sliding scale of wages and benefits into the platform. However this hint of "Trotskyism" had no real revolutionary content. It was divorced from workers' control demands, and in a period of low inflation was little more than a cosmetic reform which even Bevan managed to support in relation to benefits. SO itself did little to add any demands for workers' control, either in connection with the sliding scale, or the government's nationalisations. It went as far as calling for "more industrial democracy in our scenes of nationalisation." (January 1949) but diplomatic evasiveness shrouded every slogan put forward.

In the SO Editorial of August 1949 on the "Way Out of the Economic Crisis", in place of the clear demands for a sliding scale of wages operated by the working class we are told: "Wages can be improved...if the government is prepared to attack the wealth and privileges of the capitalists." The question of workers' control over industry is posed thus: "The basic industries of the country must be operated as part of a national plan. The workers' themselves, with the aid of technicians and Government representatives, can operate these industries...." This concession, which effectively amounts to workers' participation, was a classic centrist amalgam of Trotskyism and left reformism. It played straight into the hands of the left-reformists who were arguing then, as Bevan was to argue after the 1951 election defeat, that it was "a constitutional outrage" to "entrust these (nationalised) industries to Boards...of Civil Servants, leaving only a power of general direction to the Ministers." (In *Place of Fear*, 1952, pp.97-8).

It was 'government representatives' that the left-reformists wanted, not workers' control. It was understandable that Bevan should identify governmental or ministerial control with socialism, but for Trotskyists - "government representatives" whether Labour or Tory should have been stigmatised as agents of the bosses.

SO repeatedly engaged in illusion-mongering about the achievements of the Labour Government and the prospects of socialism through the Labour Party and Parliament. Indeed workers' illusions in the Labour Government as a workers' government introducing socialism were consciously bolstered. Thus, the Editorial of May 1949 trumpeted: "Labour Believes in Socialism". "In Britain we have taken a great step forward towards socialism by defeating the Tories and establishing for the first time in our history a majority Labour Government." And this was after nearly four years of Labour rule on behalf of the capitalists! In an April 51 Editorial, it was claimed that the Labour Government was "itself engaged in freeing Britain from the exactions of the capitalist class..." In the Editorial of January 1950 the Labour Government was urged "to abolish capitalist exploitation and replace it with planned socialist co-operation..." and in the October 1951 Election supplement, workers were urged to vote Labour: "as an expression of your confidence in the workers' ability to govern this country...and to act so that the Labour Government will destroy capitalism."

Bit by bit the Trotskyist programme was trimmed to fit the rhetoric of the lefts. Every constitutional, parliamentary illusion was nourished in the pages of SO. The notion of direct independent working class action as alone capable of erecting a workers' state on the ruins of the bourgeois state found no place in SO's columns. In its place its readers were treated to the musings of Mr. H. Davies' MP's "Week in Westminster" or Tom Braddock's socialist romanticism.

Industrial disputes were given extensive coverage by Socialist Outlook. The resistance to the austerity programme of the Labour Government was supported. However the goal of the resistance was declared to be a replacement of the leadership of the Labour Party with a "left" one. This was seen as the answer to the conflict. Every radical phrase, every loose leftist remark, or sign of discontent in the PLP was seized upon as proof of the possibility that the lefts in the LP would fight the right for leadership.

It came as no surprise that the "deep entry" perspective undermined the belief of these "Trotskyists" in the need for even a hint of political independence from Labourism. The whole logic of the perspective and practice leads in the direction of total liquidation. Indeed, SO was a conveyor belt for many out of revolutionary politics. One leader of the RCP, who fought Healy's early opportunism but later succumbed, was Jock Haston. His resignation letter eloquently summed up the logic of Healy's liquidationist project; "Publically in the paper it is argued, not by right or left-wing Labour Party members, but by Trotskyists, that the Labour Party is a socialist party, the mass party of the working class to which all workers must loyally adhere; and that this party can transform society through Parliament. But privately within the confines of the group, the opposite is advocated. Allegedly on the basis of Marxist theory, it is categorically denied that it is possible to transform this party into an instrument for the overthrow of capitalism, and that parliament can be used as the vehicle for such a transformation. The line in the paper ...is either 'a capitulation before the pressure of bourgeois-democratic public opinion' or a tacit admission that this aspect of 'fundamentals' is not applicable."

Haston and others were to conclude it was the latter. Those that remained could sustain their centrism only by reducing Trotskyism to a private faith based on a mixture of economic catastrophism and political 'proce'ssism' which would guarantee eventual success.

"Socialist Outlook" was marked by a passive acceptance of the classic reformist divide between trade union and political struggle and could only think of making trade union struggles "political" by subordinating them to Labour Party routinism. Thus articles in SO could declare: "It is not possible for a militant trade unionist to struggle politically unless he does it through the Labour Party." (SO no.56, P. Williams.)

Despite the fact that shop stewards and leading militants wrote for the paper, no Trotskyist critique of the trade union bureaucracy was advanced. Extreme right-wingers, like Arthur Deakin of the TGWU, were denounced but the political limitations of the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct social caste was never pointed to or warned against. In practical struggles the steps necessary to achieve rank and file political independence were never advanced. The fact was that Healy was compromised by his alliance with "left" bureaucrats like Stanley within SO. The alliance was on Stanley's terms.

ESTABLISHING FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS

The limitations this imposed were again highlighted when Labour was in opposition after 1951. The "lefts" as usual indulged in more radical phrases now they were free from the responsibility of office. Conference became the scene of sharp left/right tussles. The Labour Party right-wing relied upon the trade union block vote to stymie constituency party aspirations. What was needed was a campaign for democratising the unions and seizing the block vote from the likes of Deakin and placing it in the hands of the political levy-paying rank and file trade unionists. The Healyite editorial control of SO could not, however, risk making this call and embarrassing the trade union bureaucrats upon whom SO relied. All that was proposed was for the left in the PLP and constituencies to win over left bureaucrats to wield the block vote for progressive policies: "If the Left Wing in the Unions now allies itself to the Left Wing in the Party and the Co-ops, the 'block vote' which has carried so many right wing motions in the past CAN NOW BE WIELDED FOR SOCIALISM". (SO. No.41 May 1952.)

This proposal, like everything else in SO, was utopian. It relied upon the "revolutionary" qualities of the left-wing of reformism. After Labour's defeat in 1951, the illusions placed in the lefts in the PLP and the unions mounted and served to underline the distance that Healy and the "Club" had travelled from Trotskyism. This accommodating view of the Labour "lefts" did not, of course, develop with Labour's defeat but had been a theme of Healy's from the early days of the faction. Perhaps the sharpest statement is found in the re-unification statement of the factions in March 1949; 'Certain lefts have developed some prestige as a result of their criticisms of the right wing leadership's policy on one or other aspect. As problems become more intense, these lefts will be more bold and outspoken as a reflection of working class pressure. Workers in the unions and the LP will gravitate towards these individuals in search of a solution to their problemsAs LP members we will be able to establish friendly connections and through them with the trends around them.' (our emphasis).

In this every last element of Trotsky's warnings on the role of the "lefts" is turned upside down. Trotsky warned that the "lefts" will ultimately deceive and seek to reconcile the workers with the Party leadership and through it to the state. They not only reflect the pressure of the workers but they seek to divert it into harmless voting bases for their own parliamentary ambitions.

This accommodation was a travesty of the united front and obstructed the development of a revolutionary wing in the Labour Party. Trotsky was crystal clear that conciliation to left leaders would result in a weakening of the revolutionary forces. His attitude towards Bevan's more radical predecessors - Purcell, Lansbury and Wheatley - demonstrates this: "The ideological and organisational formation of a really revolutionary party, on the basis of a mass movement, is only conceivable under conditions of a continuous, systematic, unwavering, untiring and naked denunciation of the muddles, the compromises, and indecisions of the quasi-left leaders of all stripes".

As Minister of Labour Bevan was finally responsible for the imprisonment of 10 gas workers for striking in 1950, and charging 7 dockers with organising an

illegal strike in 1951. On a range of issues the other lefts had shown themselves to be of a similar ilk. Healy refused to make any untiring and unwavering criticism of them. He dubbed the Bevanites "centrists", and maintained friendly relations with the His approach to the lefts was that of a Stalin or a Bukharin rather than a Trotsky. It was an infallible sign of his centrism.

Labour lost the October 1951 General Election despite registering their highest ever vote. As usual the lefts in the PLP took the advantage of a period in opposition to campaign for "left" policies. More often than not the friction which results within the Labour Party is not wholly bad from the standpoint of the reformist bureaucracy. Even if the policy changes are resisted by the right, the advance of the left does have the effect of restoring worn credibility during the period of office. This was no less true of "Bevanism" than it was of Cripps' "Socialist League" in the 1930 wilderness, or of Benn after 1970 and 1979. Experience shows, however, that in each case, the "Trotskyist" centrists are a key component in strengthening rather than testing the illusions that these left reformists generate. Healy's self-appointed role was to maintain "friendly relations" with Bevanite MPs and assist them to organise their supporters.

Bevan's credit in the working class movement rested above all on his construction of the National Health Service and his opposition to re-armament as part of the American cold war drive. It was the linking of these issues which was to lead to his resignation from the Cabinet in April 1951. When Gaitskill's 1951 budget pushed defence expenditure beyond 14% of GNP and involved clawing back £23 million from the NHS to help do it, Bevan resigned. This gesture was the start of the Bevanite movement. Organisationally, Bevanism was always extremely weak, its core being up to 50 or 60 Labour MPs. Bevan was loathe to organise the constituency rank and file and it was "Tribune" which in 1952 and 1953 organised the "Brains Trusts" meetings for these MPs. But these were no more than public meetings. There were no organised factions within the constituency parties. Bevanism was even weaker in the trade unions. Appealing over the heads of the trade union bureaucrats was out of the question for Bevan and Co. Nor was there at this time a discontented layer of trade union officials who could be related to, as with Benn after 1979. Certainly there was a powerful if beleaguered CP network but in Cold War circumstances Bevan and Co. were terrified of the red smear.

IN PLACE OF CRITICISM

Politically Bevan's oppositional stance was summarised in his book *In Place of Fear* (1952). The politics of this book were timid. His criticisms of parliamentary democracy were insignificant and lacked even the limited reforms advocated by today's Bennites. His proposals on nationalisation were much less radical than Cripps' of twenty years earlier. In summary Bevanism stood domestically for a "reasonable" level of defence spending, against NHS charges and for a moderate extension of nationalisation. On the foreign policy front Bevan was opposed to German re-armament and Britain's involvement in SEATO. Whilst in opposition the Bevanites exclusive arenas of "struggle" were the 1952-54 Labour Party Conferences and the House of Commons. In the various conferences Bevan's nationalisation proposals were soundly beaten by the block vote although 6 of the CLP NEC seats went to Bevanites each time.

His policies amounted to a "little England" revolt from becoming the subordinate partner of American imperialism during the Cold War. It was his stance on foreign policy, rather than his domestic policies, that brought down the wrath of the Labour right and the Tories. He threatened to reduce British imperialism to a fourth rate power. To them the loss of the Empire meant that a junior partnership with the US was the only realistic imperialist foreign policy that would preserve an influential role for Britain in the world.

The right wing counter-offensive to Bevan began in October 1952 when they voted to ban groups within the PLP. Bevan accepted immediately and the PLP group became "clandestine". The weakness of Bevanism was obvious here. Rather than campaign for their right to organise Bevan complied. "Socialist Outlook" calmly accepted Bevan's retreat. This was no surprise. The fake Trotskyist John Lawrence had praised the decision of the Socialist Fellowship not to fight when they were proscribed in early 1951 - a sacrifice to electoral credibility by Labour's NEC. Lawrence had opined: "They (the Socialist Fellowship - WP) have very wisely decided not to be driven out of the ranks of the Labour Party but to stay inside and fight it out." (SO, May 1951). Some fight, the first move of which is to dissolve your own army! Warning to the task of apologists for capitulation, the SF wrote to the NEC in September 1951: "As loyal members of the LP who have never had any interests separate and apart from the Labour Party we are obliged to accept the decisions of the NEC." Secret connoisseurs of Marxism will catch the allusion to the Communist Manifesto's "They (The Communists - WP) have no interests separate and apart from the proletariat as a whole." The sleight of hand whereby "proletariat" becomes Labour Party speaks volumes. These "Communists" certainly did not "disdain to conceal their aims." In true Walter Mitty fashion they consoled themselves with fantasies of power and success: "The SF may be gone but the ideas for which it fought will, we are sure, become the official policy of the movement in a shorter time than the witch-hunters imagine." (May 1951)

COVERING THE RETREAT

This covering up of the impotence and retreat of the left persists throughout the rest of "Socialist Outlook's" life. The political programme of the paper was reducible to "the return of a new and more socialist Labour Government" (No.41,1952). The guarantee of its socialist character would be the victory of the left around Bevan, whose politics were equated with socialism. Despite the defeat of the left at the 1952 Morecambe Conference, "Socialist Outlook's" headline exploded: "BEVAN GIVES THE LEAD THE WORKERS' WANT." The Editorial below blithely stated: "The first two days' proceedings at Morecambe have shown that the LP is turning resolutely to the socialist road....the delegates came to Morecambe looking for a clear alternative to the old politics. Aneurin Bevan gave them such a lead in his speech of the first day." (SO, No.51, Oct. 1952). The following month SO proclaimed (No.56): "Aneurin Bevan Demands a Real Socialist Policy." This ridiculous grovelling before such a timid left reformist programme and leader existed alongside fantasies about the growing successes in the fight against the right. In 1953 (No.69) SO detected "a gathering triumph of the vast majority of the rank and file of the Party over those few lordly leaders who would drag the movement behind the tail of the Tories...socialists in the Party are bound to triumph in the end." This was despite the steam-roller defeats at each Conference at the hands of Atlee, Gaitskill, Deakin and company, and despite the NEC's squelching of "Tribune's" Brains' Trust as "contrary to the spirit and intention of the recent decision of the PLP." Healy's schemas never have, and no doubt never will, brook interference from vulgar "appearances."

Through 1953-4 as Bevan's conciliationism became pronounced SO continued to laud him. The economic crisis, it was thought, would soon produce a mass radicalisation. This nonsense was expressed by Lawrence in an SO Editorial in 1953, at a time when the post-war boom was well underway: "Many of the points in Labour's programme are good in themselves, but their realisation is still envisaged as being achieved within the framework of a continuing prosperity of the western (capitalist) world. It is precisely this which makes the programme entirely inadequate and even Utopian in the present

world realities. As everyone now admits, the American recession, that is, slump, is now here!" (SO, Nov. 1953). Healy and Lawrence's predictions had acquired the scientific value of Old Moore's Almanac.

The end of the "Socialist Outlook" project came at the crossroads of two events; one within "the Club", one within the left-wing of the Labour Party.

The split in "the Club" between Healy and Lawrence in 1953 was a reflection of the long-term crisis within the Fourth International itself. Disoriented by the expansion of Stalinism the leadership of the FI, after the Tito-Stalin split, capitulated to Stalinism. In Britain this capitulation was modified to encompass the "left centrist" Bevan.

During the first two years of SO's life an even-handed conciliationism to Labourism and Stalinism had prevailed. It actually suited many of the lefts such as Braddock, many of whom were distinctly pro-Stalinist, especially "lefts" in international affairs. However, Britain's involvement in the Korean War changed things dramatically. The Labourites swung, by and large, behind the British Government. John Lawrence, the editor of SO, swung the paper towards an anti-war stance. This produced schisms within the SO periphery.

Prominent figures in the Socialist Fellowship, like Fenner Brockway and Ellis Smith, resigned. The Bevanites, long-time pacifists now showing their true social patriotic colours, began to distance themselves from Healy and his paper. Healy tolerated the pro-Stalinist line of the paper until, in 1953, Pablo proposed that the British, along with other sections, should enter ("entryism sui generis") the Stalinist parties. This proposal split the "Club" wide open. Lawrence acted as Pablo's agent while Healy with all his might resisted since his opportunistic appetite could not be sated by work in the isolated rump of British Stalinism when Labourism was the mass force in the British working class.

The struggle within "the Club" didn't last very long with Healy winning a majority of the members - probably now less than 100, so "successful" had the SO tactic been. But there was a protracted fight for "Socialist Outlook", between Nov. 1953 and April 1954. This was not an ideological battle - the pages of SO hardly changed at all. But the battle over the control of the paper which Healy eventually won, was fierce, even leading to physical fights between Lawrence and Healy. By the time of Healy's 'victory' events within the LP and the Bevanite movement were signalling the end of the line for SO. The first two to three years of

SO were the most influential; its sales built up to a claimed 9,000 a month. By the time of the struggle for control of SO the paper was a weekly with a sale of around 4,500. The major change in its fortunes came with the defeat of the Labour Government in 1951. From then on the "neutralist" "Tribune", also a weekly by 1952, was outflanking SO in its flattery of Bevan as an "organiser" of the amorphous left. By 1954 devoid of any distinctive revolutionary politics to win readers away from Bevanism, "Socialist Outlook" was simply a second-rate "Tribune". The timing of SO's demise was dictated by the exigencies of Transport House's offensive against Bevan. SO was proscribed by the NEC by way of a warning shot across the bows of Bevan and his supporters.

Healy and his supporters meekly bowed their necks to the axe, if not with a glad heart, then at least with the sense of relief that the dwindling band of "Club" members remained Party members and that the "mass radicalisation" of the working class would still be able to crystallise around "Tribune." To be there when the masses arrived, Healy and Co. took the logical step of occasionally writing for and selling Michael Foot's "Tribune" for the next three years, pathetically underlining the "good bits" in copies to sell to working class readers!

Healy's successful liquidation of the only united and significant revolutionary Trotskyist grouping in the late '40s and early '50s was undoubtedly a tragedy. It was part of the international tragedy of the destruction of Trotsky's Fourth International by the generation of epigones Pablo, Mandel, Cannon, Hansen, Lambert etc. The repetition of this experience by Socialist Organizer and now Socialist Action, bids fair to repeat this history "the second time as farce."

by K. Hassell



Bevan on his way to his first cabinet meeting

EXTRACTS FROM:-

**THE
DEATH AGONY
OF THE FOURTH
INTERNATIONAL
and the tasks of Trotskyists
today**

**WORKERS POWER
IRISH WORKERS GROUP**

The epigones destroy the Fourth International

In 1944 several of the European sections of the FI regrouped at a conference held inside Nazi-occupied Europe. They adopted the "Theses on the Liquidation of World War 2 and the Revolutionary Upsurge". These testified to the continuing revolutionary potential of the sections of the Fourth International. The theses, written at a time when anti-German chauvinism and pro-allied sentiments were growing rapidly in Europe, espoused a *defeatist* position in the war. They indicated that the reconstruction of the FI on a revolutionary basis was a real possibility. However, severe disorientation over the crucial question of perspectives, obstructed this development from taking final shape.

The aftermath of the Second World War was not as Trotsky had predicted it. Key elements of his perspectives, when he wrote the Transitional Programme, for the *period* ahead were:

- a) a massive revolutionary wave - particularly in Germany, Italy, France, Britain and the USA;
- b) the qualitative transformation of the FI into a mass force able to use the Transitional Programme to relate to and win leadership in the revolutionary upsurge;
- c) the death agony of capitalism or its survival only on a totalitarian basis;
- d) the destruction of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR either by political revolution or by a victorious imperialism;
- e) the disintegration of the old leaderships of the working class - the social democrats and the stalinists, as their material roots disappeared - crumbs from the table of imperialism and bureaucratic privilege in the USSR.

As we have shown, the Transitional Programme was not a collection of timeless Marxist truisms, it was a "manual of action". As such it was necessary to constantly test its demands, tactics and perspectives against reality, and to develop the programme accordingly. The followers of Trotsky repeatedly failed to do this after the war. Trotsky's perspective at the beginning of the Second World War was that it would engender revolutionary upheavals as great as, or greater than those succeeding the First World War. Capitalist economy, bourgeois society and its reformist parasites would be thrown into mortal crisis. Likewise, the Stalinist bureaucracy, if it survived a military debacle at the hands of the imperialist aggressor, would succumb to the political revolution of the proletariat aroused by revolutionary events in the west. Criticisms can certainly be made of Trotsky's telescoped timetable for the historic exhaustion of US monopoly capitalism. However, this is an error Marx, Engels and Lenin made before him, and is a risk of error inseparable from revolutionary optimism.

Thus Trotsky considered an earlier error of perspective (at the Third World Congress of the Comintern) in the following way: "We had not predicted a solar eclipse, i.e. an event beyond our will and entirely independent of our actions. Involved is an historical event which can and will occur with our participation. When we spoke of the revolution resulting from the world war, it meant that we were and are striving to utilise the consequences of the world war in order to speed the revolution in every way possible".²⁰

Trotsky's perspective was falsified by events after the war. Firstly, by powerful objective factors of the first magnitude. Whilst Britain and France, two of the three "democratic imperialisms" proved as rotten and prone to instability as Trotsky had observed, this was far from being the case with the United States. The colossal scale and dynamism of its productive forces enabled it to sustain the moribund British Empire and raise French imperialism from the grave - as client or subordinate powers, unable to challenge their Wall St masters.

Likewise in the Russian workers' state, planned economy proved stronger than the sabotage and bungling of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Though Stalin and his clique brought the workers' state to the edge of the abyss in 1941, the heroic resistance of the proletariat and the rallying to the workers' state of the peasantry and the nationalities, despite Stalin's crimes, and because of fascist atrocities, gave the USSR victory. This victory, however, strengthened not only the state but also the bonapartist bureaucracy. The advance of American and Russian armies across the European continent placed foreign armies hostile to proletarian revolution amongst the proletariat of France, Italy and Germany. The victory of Stalinism and Anglo-American (democratic) imperialism, strengthened the political forces dependent on these tendencies.

On the one hand, the openly bourgeois parties and social democracy were revived due to the victory of the "democracies". On the other hand, the Stalinist parties with the weight of Russian victory and their own partisan struggles were likewise strengthened. Far from these forces facing the loss of their material basis, or suffering political demise and organisational disintegration, they emerged from the war much stronger than they were in the late 1930s. Moreover, the politics of class collaboration - established via the Popular Front before the

war, and having behind it the prestige of the Second and Third Internationals, were not disrupted until 1946/7, when the post-war crisis had been overcome. The whole weight of bourgeois democracy and Stalinism was thrown into the scales against proletarian revolution.

Once the immediate potentially revolutionary situations were weathered, the enormous economic power of the USA was brought to bear in the West through Marshall Aid, and the Kremlin bureaucracy sealed off its East European glacis and began the process of transforming them into degenerate workers' states, having expropriated the proletariat politically in advance. In Germany the working class upsurge was very weak and was suppressed immediately by Allied and Russian military means. In Italy and France the Stalinists demobilised the partisan militias. In Central and Eastern Europe a varied combination of Soviet forces and indigenous Stalinists and their popular frontist allies were able to prevent any revolutionary upsurge from occurring.

Thus not only were the Trotskyists weak and disorganised, but the conditions for them to emerge from the situation of marginalised propaganda groups did not materialise. Instead, the counter-revolutionary social democracy and Stalinist parties grew in strength, isolating the Trotskyists yet again. Thus social democracy and Stalinism exerted tremendous pressure on the tiny and disoriented forces of the Fourth International.

Whilst it was certainly possible to expect renewed political and social crisis with a further capitalist crisis - clearly by 1946/7 a new assessment of perspectives, an accounting for the failure of the previous ones, was necessary. Had this been done, it is unlikely that such a one-sided, false perspective would have emerged based on catastrophic crisis, an immediately renewed war and the delayed revolution. The transformation of the Marxist understanding of crises, of war, of revolution from events into long processes was the result of a purblind empiricism which sought at all costs to prolong the "revolutionary perspective".

The isolated and defeated FI leaders could not face the fact that they were passing from an aborted revolutionary period (1944/5), to a counter-revolutionary period, albeit one of democratic counter-revolution in the principle imperialist countries, rather than bonapartist or fascist reaction. The majority of the old FI leaders simply shut their eyes and held on to "orthodoxy". However the new European and then International leadership around Michel Pablo and Ernest Germain began to transform Trotsky's tactics, strategy and programme in a piecemeal and empirical fashion under the cover of an apparent fidelity to his revolutionary perspectives. To preserve these, "revolution" became a world objective process which chose here the Stalinist bureaucracy, there the Titoite partisans, elsewhere the Bevanite parliamentarians, as its agents for a whole historic stage. It was only a matter of time before this piecemeal revision was systematised. This Pablo attempted in 1950 - 1951.

The FI developed perspectives for after the war based on a combination of dogmatism and blind optimism. This dogmatism spawned a series of errors which oscillated between sectarianism and opportunism. In time the political vibrations broke up the FI into two factions both equally tainted with these errors. Despite the signs of economic boom in the USA, Cannon insisted that the American revolution was imminent. Furthermore the perspective of a third world war meant that the world tottered on the verge of a permanently pre-revolutionary situation. The documents of the 1946 International Congress clearly reveal this tendency in the FI. Thus in "The New Imperialist Peace and the Building of Parties of the FI", they argued: "The war has aggravated the disorganisation of capitalist economy and has destroyed the last possibilities of a relatively stable equilibrium in social and international relations".²¹ And again: "If the war did not immediately create in Europe a revolutionary upsurge of the scope and tempo we anticipated, it is nevertheless undeniable that it destroyed capitalist equilibrium on a world scale, thus opening up a long revolutionary period".²² This "long revolutionary period" became an ever-expanding one, and as such ceased to have any useful specific meaning.

The potential for rectifying these errors of perspective and of reconstructing the FI on a revolutionary basis existed *within* the forces of Trotskyism. There were challenges to the leadership's rigid adherence to Trotsky's perspectives. In the SWP, for example, Felix Morrow led an opposition that argued: "Trotsky tried to teach us to understand that it is necessary to make a prognosis but equally necessary to understand that it is impossible to guess the tempos in advance for a prolonged period, and hence one must introduce the necessary correctives into it in the course of experience".²³

Similarly the British RCP (a product of a 1944 fusion between the RSL and the WIL) argued against the "New Imperialist Peace" document, that Stalinism had been strengthened and not thrown into mortal crisis. It pointed to the danger of disorientation that the failure to recognise this could lead to. The SWP contended in 1946 that the

war was still on. The FI hesitated before calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from occupied territories. Initially, it rejected a British amendment to this effect, though it later corrected its position. The French section argued that the USSR, in 1946, was more threatened than at the darkest hour of the war. Perhaps more astonishing was the answer the Trotskyist "Neuer Spartakus" gave to the question: "Why does Stalin rob? Because he lost the war".²⁴ Also on the question of the immediacy of imperialism's own economic crisis, the RCP contended "But in a resolution that seeks to orientate our own cadres on immediate economic perspectives - from which the next stage of the

later abuse of the earlier perspective was absolutely connected to its essential falseness. The optimism about the likely spontaneous transformation of a war into a civil war embodied a key methodological error committed by the post-War FI. Trotsky's perspectives and prognoses were turned into a prophecy that had to come true in the short term. The collapse of capitalism and the eruption of a revolutionary tide were designated as the inevitable outcomes of an unfolding objective process to which Trotskyists had to relate.

However, whilst capitalist crises and upsurges of working class struggle clearly do arise out of the objective contradictions of capitalism, there is no "objective process" which resolves such crises. Without the victory of the subjective factor - the revolutionary party - there can be no lasting victories for the working class, courtesy of the "objective process" alone.

The FI did not lead the working class in any country in 1948. Furthermore, the revolutionary or pre-revolutionary crises of the immediately post-war period were clearly over. Yet the FI held to its perspectives. At the 1948 FI Congress, the Theses on Stalinism did not describe the events in Eastern Europe (including Yugoslavia) as part of any revolutionary process. This retention of the earlier perspectives was what allowed the FI to maintain its orthodox political standpoint. As such we stand by the programmatic declarations of the 1948 Congress as well as of the 1938 Congress. However, as the FI leadership's world view became increasingly at variance with reality, so their orthodoxy became ever more fragile. All that was needed to dislodge the FI from the orthodox positions it held until 1948 was a sharp twist in world events.

That twist in events came almost immediately after the 1948 Congress. In the summer of 1948 the Tito-Stalin split was made public. The Yugoslavian Communist Party (YCP) was expelled from the Cominform and was denounced as, variously, "Trotskyist" and "Fascist". Out of the Yugoslav events the FI developed centrist conclusions and positions. They saw in them only a confirmation of their wrong perspectives. Thus, according to the FI leadership, Yugoslavia demonstrated the crisis of Stalinism that they had been predicting since 1944. Further, the whole development was a part of the successful revolutionary upsurge that had always been a key component of their perspectives. The partisan war was now described, post facto, as a "proletarian revolution" (initially only by Pablo, but, by 1951, by the whole of the FI leadership). The state established by that "revolution" was a workers' state which was seen to be suffering from merely quantitative deformations, i.e., it was not seen as a qualitatively degenerate workers' state. Tito's parasitic bureaucracy was, correspondingly, not a counter-revolutionary factor but a "Leninist" friend who needed the FI's advice - not its revolutionary opposition. The Open Letter from the International Secretariat requesting attendance rights at the YCP Congress of July 1948 declared "We understand exactly the tremendous responsibility weighing upon you, and...we consider it our communist duty to assist you in resolving the present crisis in communism along proletarian and Leninist lines".²⁵

Michel Pablo, the leader of the FI at the time, used the Yugoslav affair to attack a number of key positions of the Trotskyist movement; on Stalinism, on the revolutionary party, the nature of revolutions and on the tactic of entryism and, through a distortion of this tactic, he attacked the communist premises of the united front tactic. Further, he argued that the process occurring in Yugoslavia (which was genuinely revolutionary according to him), would also take place in the rest of the Eastern European "buffer zone" as well; indeed, he already saw it taking place in China.²⁶

Pablo's positions on Yugoslavia were adopted by the FI at its Third World Congress in 1951. They were subscribed to by all the major sections and leading figures of the FI. There was no revolutionary opposition to Pablo's centrist position that "In Yugoslavia, the first country where the proletariat took power since the degeneration of the USSR, Stalinism no longer exists today as an effective factor in the workers' movement which, however, does not exclude its possible re-emergence under certain conditions".²⁰

Essential to Pablo's position was a revision of the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism, i.e. that it is invariably a counter-revolutionary force. This does not mean that Stalinism can never carry out progressive measures, even up to the transformation of property relations. What it does mean is that always, under all conditions, the Stalinists will obstruct the working class from taking political power

directly into its own hands and using that power in its own class interests. In place of this appraisal of Stalinism, Pablo argued in his Report to the 1951 Congress that "We have made clear that the CP's are not exactly reformist parties and that under certain exceptional conditions they possess the possibility of projecting a revolutionary orientation".²¹ Pablo combined this revision with an attack on Lenin's theory of imperialism as the epoch of wars and revolutions. He replaced this with a formula that was ridiculous both as an immediate perspective and as a description of a defining feature of the epoch: "In their stead, it is the conception of Revolution-War, of War-Revolution which is emerging and upon which the perspectives and orientation of revolutionary Marxists in our epoch should rest".²²

Using this theoretical "rearmament" (i.e. revision) as his pretext, Pablo embarked upon a tactical course which involved the complete liquidation of the Trotskyist programme. This liquidation was necessitated by the organisational and political concessions that were involved in Pablo's "entryism sui generis" ("entryism of a special type", based on long-term entry and the hiding of the revolutionary programme). Pablo argued that the imminent War-Revolution left no time to build Trotskyist parties, but that this was no longer a crucial problem because in the coming period a variety of political formations could embark on the struggle for power. The Stalinists, for example, could be forced as parties to project a revolutionary orientation. Entryism was needed in order to generate the necessary pressure. In other formations, such as social democracy or petty bourgeois nationalism, the perspective was one of centrist splits away from the parties. Here entryism was necessary in order to prepare and develop such a split. In both cases the entryism that was to be undertaken was not that advocated by Trotsky, around the time of the "French Turn", that is entryism conceived of as a united front tactic to win leftward moving workers to the communist programme, a tactic that could not be a long-term one. The entryism "of a special type" had to be deep and long term, the open fight for the revolutionary programme had to be "temporarily" abandoned.²³

This thorough-going opportunism propelled the FI along a sharp, rightward-moving centrist course. In 1951, Pablo characterised the Peronist movement in Argentina as "anti-capitalist". The Chinese Communist Party soon became, like the YCP, a revolutionary factor. In Britain, the left reformist Aneurin Bevan became a "left centrist". In 1952, Pablo instructed the French section to make a deep entry into the PCF, to integrate itself into the working class movement "as it was". Such concessions inevitably entailed the abandonment of any fight for principled politics against the leaderships of the parties or movements into which the Trotskyists entered.

By 1953 the Pablo-led International Secretariat (IS) was leading the International into headlong programmatic liquidation: "entryism sui generis", the "revolutionary" nature of Stalinism, the epoch of "War-Revolution", the subordinate role of the Party; all of these were Pablo's contribution to the FI's centrist collapse.

The principal forces who organised the 1953 split with the Pablo-led IS - the SWP (US), the PCI (France) and the Healy group in Britain were not a revolutionary "Left Opposition". The International Committee (IC) that they formed does not constitute a "continuity" of Trotskyism as against Pabloite revisionism. They failed to break decisively with the liquidationist positions of the 1951 Congress which paved the way for Pablo's tactical turns. They did not criticise (i.e. including self-criticism) the post-war reconstruction of the FI and the undermining of Trotsky's programme and method that this involved.

The IC embodied the national isolationism of its three largest components, each of which only opposed Pablo's bureaucratically centralised drive to implement the perspectives of the 1951 Congress when it affected them. In the IC itself they rejected democratic centralism outright. Moreover, by not going beyond the framework of a public faction, they refused to wage an intransigent fight against Pablo-Mandel.

The split of 1953 therefore, was both too late and too early. Politically it was too late because all the IC groups had already endorsed and re-endorsed the liquidation of the line in the period 1948-51. It was too early in the sense that it came before any fight within the framework of the FI to win a majority at the following congress. Indeed, the decision to move straight to a split pre-empted such a fight. The IC groupings had no distinct and thoroughgoing political alternative to Pablo-Mandel and, therefore, they remained immobilised in a position where factional heat was a substitute for political light.

Despite acceptance of the 1948/51 revisionism, the IC was able, on occasion, to make isolated but valid criticisms of the IS. However, such criticisms, born out of both factional point-scoring and revulsion at IS betrayals, only occasionally went beyond a sterile defence of what they called "orthodoxy". In reality this was a revisionist melange of catastrophism, Stalinophobia and softness on social democracy - a mixture that Cannon, Bleibtreu-Favre³⁴, and then Lambert and Healy had long pioneered. An examination of each of these groups' record before and during the split proves this conclusively.

The SWP had political agreement with Pablo right up to 1953. On Yugoslavia they had fully supported Pablo's orientation to Tito, and endorsed the 1951 Congress resolution on Yugoslavia. As early as 1948, an SWP NC statement insisted that Tito had been "compelled by the logic of the struggle" and had ceased to be a Stalinist.³⁵ Thus when the PCI contacted Cannon to help them resist Pablo's policies and bureaucratic manoeuvres, he had no hesitation in replying: "I think that the Third World Congress made a correct analysis of the new post-war reality in the world and the unforeseen turns this reality has taken...It is the unanimous opinion of the leading people that the authors of these documents have rendered a great service to the movement for which they deserve appreciation and comradely support, not distrust and denigration".³⁶

This was the same leadership that was to declare in the "Open Letter" of November 1953 (the de facto split document)³⁷ that this very same leadership was "an uncontrolled, secret, personal faction in the administration of the Fourth International which has abandoned the basic programme of Trotskyism".

Yet the SWP document "Against Pabloite Revisionism"³⁸ accepted all of the tenets of Pablo's positions. The Second World War produced a revolutionary wave of "greater scope, intensity and resistance than the First World War" we are told. This produced "the revolutionary victories in Yugoslavia and China".³⁹

The principled positions against Stalinism that the "Open Letter" took were compatible with the SWP's centrism. Their opposition to the Stalinists' betrayal of the French General Strike, their position for the withdrawal of Russian troops from East Germany after the 1953 rising there, and their refusal to accept the post-Stalin liberalisation in the USSR as good coin, were all in themselves principled positions. A revolutionary opposition would have shared these positions.

However such an opposition - unlike the SWP and the IC - would not have pretended that the failure of the IS to hold these positions was the result of the influence of one man - Pablo - as the Open Letter insisted. On the contrary, they would have located these errors in past errors. This the SWP would not do in 1953. These issues, as can be seen by the later unity overtures made by the SWP towards the IS, were merely the pretext for the split.

The real cause was, in fact, an organisational one. The SWP turned against Pablo only as a result of his "interference" in the SWP (via the Cochran-Clarke faction). True to their national-isolationist tradition (revealed previously during the war) the SWP leaders refused to be treated as a "branch office" of the FI; that is, they refused to undertake a tactical decision that had been agreed by the majority of the leadership of the FI at an International Executive Committee meeting. The breaking point came when Pablo supported the Cochran-Clarke faction. The SWP leaders discovered a number of political disagreements and went straight for a split. Prior to this Cannon had believed that his previous support for Pablo would ensure that the SWP would not be subjected to IS discipline. That discipline had been alright for the PCI in France, but not for the SWP. He declared in May 1953: "But what if Pablo and the IS should come out in support of the minority. If such a thing could occur - and I'm not saying it will; I'm just assuming that the absolutely incredible arrogance of the Cochranites is based on some rumour that they are going to have the support of the IS - if that should occur, it would not oblige us to change our minds about anything. We wouldn't do so".⁴⁰

When this did occur a few months after Cannon made this speech, he was true to his word. But even then he failed to nail the methodological and programmatic errors of the IS and the Cochran-Clarke faction. In true IC fashion, he criticised them and their degeneration from a purely sociological standpoint. The Clarke group were petit-bourgeois (true). The Cochran group were tired workers in retreat (true). Both were intent on liquidating the party (true). All of these failures were important and Cannon was right to point to them. But he

was wrong to conclude that these factors contained the *essence* of the problem and by extension the *essence* of "Pabloism". For when it became clear that Pablo had not liquidated - i.e. organisationally dissolved - the FI, the road back to the Pablo-led IS was again open. The essence of Pablo's politics was to be located in his programmatic premises first, his tactical conclusions second, and his organisational methods last. On the SWP's part, therefore, the split stemmed from national considerations and centred for the most part on organisational questions. It was not a definitive, principled political split, despite Cannon's oaths to the contrary.

With the Healy group in Britain the American pattern was followed almost exactly. The lack of serious political differences on the issues at stake was reflected in more than just the fact that Healy, like Pablo, had a portrait of Tito in his office! Healy himself had been Cannon's man in the RCP from 1944/7. He worked closely with Pablo to destroy the Haston/Grant leadership - a process urgently speeded up after Haston had expressed criticisms of the softness shown by Pablo towards Tito. In particular, Healy could make no "root and branch" criticism of "entryism sui generis" since he and Lawrence had actually pioneered this from 1947 onwards. This "tactic" flowed from a "perspective" which foresaw the evolution to centrism of the left reformist leaders. Behind them a mass movement would be created which would force the removal of the right-reformist leaders. The task of Trotskyists in all this was to amalgamate with the left and assist in this development. To do this required the public abandonment of the Transitional Programme, the FI and the revolutionary party, and it meant not producing a specifically revolutionary propaganda organ. In their place there was to be a highly secret faction and a public left-centrist grouping publishing a newspaper which would express the politics appropriate to such a formation. This policy was put into practice by Healy after the collapse of the RCP. The British section was turned into "The Club", a secret Trotskyist grouping. The broader, public grouping known as the Socialist Fellowship included Labour MPs and union bureaucrats, gathered around the newspaper "Socialist Outlook". Pablo approved of this tactic and embodied its experience in his "entryism sui generis" which applied to Stalinist parties as well as to social democrats.⁴¹

This new type of entryism was explicitly demarcated and distinguished from that advocated by Trotsky. That had been based on the open building of a revolutionary tendency within a reformist party in circumstances where the evolution of the class struggle and the influx of subjectively revolutionary proletarian elements made it possible to unfurl the banner of the FI, at least temporarily. Trotsky recognised that such an entry would last for a limited period, possibly a mere episode.

When one comes to look at the Healyites' own account of their split with Pabloism⁴², the political questions are less than clear. The dispute arose when Lawrence (like Clarke in America) became a direct agent for Pablo and challenged Healy's leadership. Over the Korean war he pushed a pro-Stalinist position on the Editorial Board of

"Socialist Outlook", in alliance with the "centrists" (Healy's term for left reformists). This breach of discipline and its consequences form the substance of "The Struggle in the British Section".⁴³

No political documents appeared at the time of the split itself. It was an organisational battle in which the number of legal shareholders in "Socialist Outlook" counted for more than the errors of the 1951 Congress and before.

However, the political differences underlying the split were real enough. With the advent of the Korean war in 1950, Pablo saw the realisation of his "war-revolution" perspective as imminent. The British section made sure that Socialist Outlook followed the Pablo line, with a number of pro-Stalinist articles appearing. Healy and Lawrence co-existed peacefully at this time. However, after the tactical turn towards entryism into Stalinist parties in 1952, Pablo, having succeeded in wrecking the French section, began to foist his tactic on other sections. By 1953, Lawrence, in cahoots with Pablo, was pushing for a much more definite pro-Stalinist orientation in Britain. Healy's longstanding and long term orientation to the Bevanites conflicted with this tactical turn. Fearing a Pabloite victory, Healy threw in his lot with Cannon, who feared similar moves in the US. He moved against Lawrence in Britain and, eventually, Pablo internationally.

The PCI in France differed from the SWP and the Healy group insofar as it had waged a limited political fight against Pablo from 1951 onwards. For their efforts, the leadership of the PCI were connived against by Pablo, Healy and Cannon! But the politics that the PCI fought on were *not* revolutionary politics.

In June 1951 the PCI leader Bleibtreu-Favre, supported by Pierre Lambert ⁴⁴ and the majority of the organisation, produced a response to Pablo's revisionist document "Where are we going?". The French document "Where is Comrade Pablo going?" ⁴⁵ was delayed in its publication by Germain (Ernest Mandel). He had duplicitously pretended to oppose Pablo on "democratic" grounds, but warned Bleibtreu-Favre against provoking Pablo into taking disciplinary measures by putting out the document. Because Bleibtreu-Favre, Lambert and the others supported Germain's document "What should be modified and what should be maintained in the Theses of the Second World Congress of the Fourth International on the Question of Stalinism?" (the famous "Ten Theses")⁴⁶, the French accepted his advice. The result was that Pablo, in collaboration with Germain, built up a Pabloite minority faction around Michel Mestre.

Pablo effectively isolated the French majority after refusing to circulate Bleibtreu-Favre's document before the Third World Congress. The French were left declaring their support for the "Ten Theses", which were not voted on at the Congress. In January 1952, Pablo proposed that the PCI should carry out an "entryism sui generis" tactic in the PCF - then in a leftist phase. The French majority, preferring an orientation to the looser SFIO, opposed this turn on tactical grounds. After a struggle, in June 1952, Pablo, Germain and Healy (with Cannon's approval) expelled the majority of the French Central Committee!

However much we would sympathise with the PCI as a victim of bureaucratic methods, their struggle was, in the end, a vacillating, politically incorrect one. First, by supporting what we have described elsewhere as Mandel's "Orthodox Revisionism"⁴⁷. Finding the idea that Stalinist parties had led what the FI regarded as healthy revolutions to victory in Yugoslavia and China, unpalatable from an "orthodox" standpoint, Mandel revised the Trotskyist position on Stalinism. It had a "dual character" - a good side and a bad side. The pressure of the masses could serve to allow the good side to win out. Thus: "The Yugoslav and Chinese examples have demonstrated that, placed in certain exceptional conditions, entire Communist Parties can modify their political line and lead the struggle of the masses up to the conquest of power, while passing beyond the objectives of the Kremlin. Under such conditions these parties cease to be Stalinist in the classical sense of the words".⁴⁸

Bleibtreu-Favre's document expressed an identical view, particularly with regard to the Chinese bureaucracy. They bitterly attacked the Chinese Trotskyists for failing to enter the CCP (which was imprisoning Trotskyists at the time) quickly enough. In other words, the French accepted Pablo's analysis of Yugoslavia and China. What they could not accept was that these states were dominated by Stalinist parties. It was for this reason that they, like everybody else in the FI, were prepared to endorse the 1951 Congress position on Yugoslavia, a position that liquidated the programme of Trotskyism.

Criticising Pablo's "objections", the French introduced their own. China, they argued, proved that "The reality of the class struggle will prove more powerful than the Kremlin apparatus, despite the non-existence of a revolutionary party".⁴⁹ The reason was because the CPs were subordinated to the Kremlin. If they went against the Kremlin then they could not be Stalinist: "In any event it is absurd to speak of a Stalinist party in China, and still more absurd to foster belief in even the resemblance of a 'victory of Stalinism in China'".⁵⁰

Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism as contradictory but predominantly counter-revolutionary even when it breaks up along social patriotic lines was junked. The PCI leadership capitulated to Stalinist parties and then, to save their "Trotskyist" souls, conveniently concluded that these parties were not Stalinist at all.

In 1951 the centrist positions of the Third World Congress on Stalinism, on Yugoslavia, and general perspectives (the impending "civil war" perspective) proved, beyond doubt, that a programmatic collapse of the Fourth International had taken place. The fact that no section voted against the Yugoslav resolution - the cornerstone of all the errors - is a fact of enormous significance. The FI as a whole had collapsed into centrism. From this point on, the task facing Trotskyists was the refoundation of a Leninist-Trotskyist International on the basis of a re-elaborated programme of revolutionary communism. Manoeuvres to replace the leadership of the FI were entirely insufficient. The programmatic basis of the FI had to be changed. The manner by which this

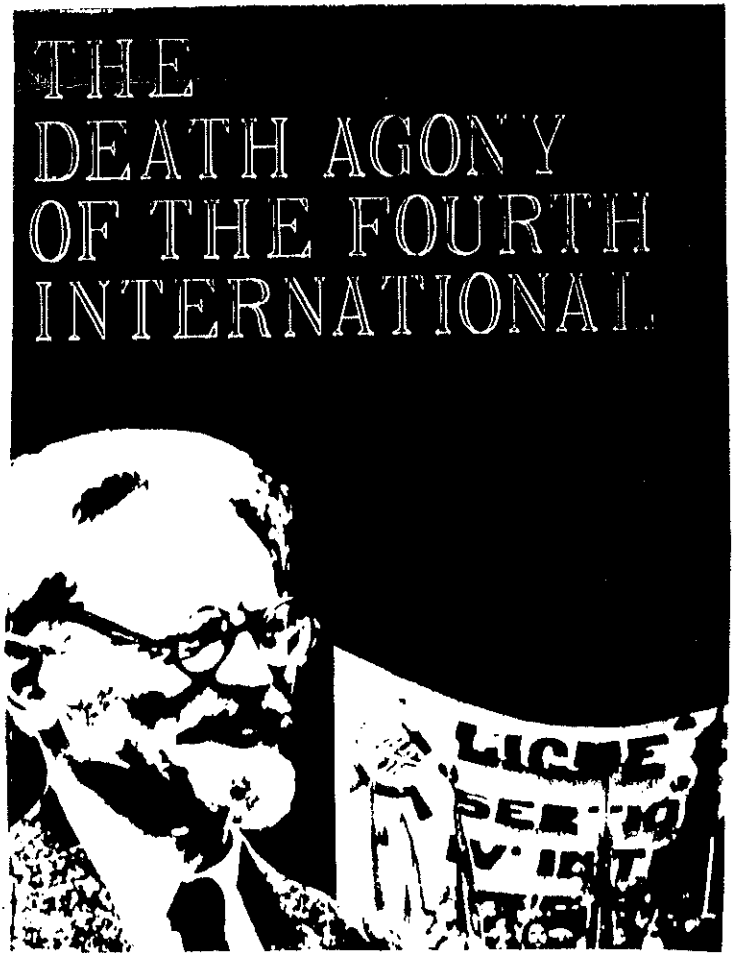
could have been done in the early 1950s is a matter of tactical speculation. What is decisive for us is that it was not done. The historical continuity of Trotskyism was shattered - as was evidenced by Pablo's use of the Congress documents at the Tenth Plenum of the International Executive Committee in February 1952, to usher in "entryism sui generis".

The opposition in America, Britain and France that did emerge in 1952-3 was subjectively committed to opposing Pablo. However, they have to be judged not by their impulse but by their politics. Their "orthodoxy" was both sterile and based on post-war revisionism, prompted by the Yugoslav events. It was not authentic Trotskyism. Thus we cannot view either component of the 1953 split as the "continuations" of Trotskyism. Both were centrist.

The IC, itself developing in a rightward direction (e.g. Healy's work in the Labour Party) was distinguished from the IS by the pace of its development. It recoiled from the most blatant expressions of liquidationism issuing from the IS, but not from the right-centrist documents that underpinned that liquidationism. Therefore the IC did not constitute a "left centrist" alternative to the IS.

The IS was a right-ward moving centrist group using the 1951 positions to draw what were entirely logical conclusions. The correct positions on East Germany and Hungary taken by the IC may have determined the tactics of a Left Opposition if it had existed. It could not have determined its estimate of the IC.

Disorientation after the war led to a programmatic collapse of the FI. After the CI's programmatic collapse, Trotsky's Left Opposition maintained a reform perspective because the CI contained within it a mass movement. After the FI's programmatic collapse, and the failure of an Opposition to materialise, the FI was left without a programme and had never contained a mass vanguard within it. The FI, unlike the CI, was in an essential sense its programme. That is why we say that after 1951, whatever the tactics that may have been employed, authentic Trotskyists had to elaborate a new programme and thus build the International anew.



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

As we have seen neither the IC nor any of its principal components constituted a revolutionary opposition to the Pablo led IS. They constituted one of the degenerating fragments of world Trotskyism, not a force for principled regeneration. Certain groupings today claim that the IC in 1953 did represent, albeit in a partial and inadequate manner, an attempt to regenerate Trotskyism. Further, they would argue that the "IC Tradition" represents the continuity of Trotskyism, notwithstanding the criticisms that might now be made of that tradition with hindsight. Not surprisingly it is groups emerging from, or at some point involved with, the IC tradition that hold to such positions - the British WSL, the IS, groupings within the OCRFI/FI (ICR) tradition etc. These judgements stem from a refusal to recognise that "Trotskyism", if it means anything, is the continuity of revolutionary communism. The formal adherence to dogma that characterised the IC was not revolutionary communism; in tactics, strategy and programme the IC groupings subverted communism.

The first thing to note about the "IC Tradition" is that it is a myth. It simply does not exist. The IC was *never* a coherent, programmatically united and democratically organised tendency. In the name of "orthodox Trotskyism" which was defined at the purely abstract level of being in favour of the building of Trotskyist parties (something the "Pabloites" had never had any real difficulty in accepting and articulating) - the IC groups split the FI without a political fight in the sections or at the scheduled World Congress. Apart from the SWP's "Open Letter" and a handful of documents from the French and the Americans against "Pabloite Revisionism" - all of which actually centre on conjunctural events and do not draw up a political balance sheet of the method and emergence of "Pabloism" - no major documents of the IC were produced in 1953 or for a long time after. Several short resolutions were produced in 1954 and 1955 on Vietnam and Algeria, but that was all. The large sections of the IC - the SWP, the French and the British - gave no central direction to the smaller groups in Canada, Chile, New Zealand, Argentina (Moreno's POR), Iceland, Switzerland, Greece and the Chinese exiles. The French, and then the British, held the secretaryship but were unable or unwilling to galvanise the IC into active life as an international organisation.

In fact, the IC's lack of democratic centralism, or even a common internal or external organ, resulted in its sections being, in reality, national sects which developed along their own lines and adapted to the peculiarities of their respective countries on the basis of the Pablo/Mandel method. The smaller groups tended to suffer political colonisation by one or other of the larger ones; the Latin Americans by the SWP, the Europeans by either the British section (Socialist Labour League - SLL - after 1959), or the French PCI (OCI after 1966, PCI again in 1982). The SWP, the group with the largest resources, published only six international discussion bulletins in ten years and "led" the IC much in the same way that it had "led" the FI after Trotsky's death. There

was only one IC congress whilst the SWP were members. It was held in Britain in 1958. On behalf of the SWP, Farrell Dobbs attended but refused to participate on a political basis. By this time the SWP was manoeuvring to cut loose from the IC and reunify with the IS. The Healy group produced no major attack on the politics of Pabloism until 1957 with W. Sinclair's (Bill Hunter) "Under a Stolen Flag". This belated reply to the Pabloites' analysis of Stalinism repeats the need for political revolution, warns against making concessions to the bureaucracy, but fails completely to trace the roots of Pablo's analysis of Stalinism. The failure to do this later allowed the SLL to accommodate to the Chinese stalinists during the Cultural Revolution and sowed the seeds of Healy's support for the Mao wing of the Chinese bureaucracy. By this time the SWP, hungry for unity, had ceased criticising the IS publicly at all. Indeed public polemic was halted in June 1954!

Thus the "IC Tradition" as such cannot be said to have existed as a coherent body of politics in the 1950s at all. To all those who point to this non-existent tradition as the "continuity of Trotskyism" we throw back the question - in what documents, theses or positions?

The incoherent nature of the IC was demonstrated by the fact that a principal leader, Cannon, re-opened discussions with Pablo and the IS (via the LSSP) in 1954 (seven months after the split). He wrote to Goonewardene in May 1954 that "there . . . is still a chance" for reunification if only the world congress were postponed⁷³. That is, reunification was now only blocked by an organisational consideration. This, despite the fact that the 1953 split was described thus, in the "Open Letter"

"The lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organisationally."⁷⁴

In a word, this was rhetoric purely for public consumption. By 1956, Cannon and the SWP were again pushing for unity. In 1957, Cannon proposed a "sweeping organisational compromise, which would permit the formal unification of the international movement before the dispute is settled. This organisational compromise cannot be left to the chance decision of a Congress."⁷⁵ In fact, from early 1957, while Cannon and the SWP had not changed their mind about Pablo's intolerable regime, they were drawing closer to the Mandel/Frank/Maitan axis, whose greater "formal orthodoxy" and verbal anti-Stalinism was gaining ground in the IS after the Hungarian revolution. This event rudely disturbed illusions of an uninterrupted process of reforms within Stalinism. Khrushchev and company were starkly revealed as the butchers of the Hungarian proletariat; Nagy and Gomulka as the treacherous misleaders of powerful political revolutionary movements. This did not, however, prevent the IS from describing the Gomulka-ites as "a centrist tendency evolving to the Left".

The triumph of Mandel's "harder" positions convinced Cannon that a deal could be struck. This, however, would have seriously endangered the separate national projects of Lambert and Healy who, consequently now revived their interest in the fight against "Pabloism". It was this that prompted Healy to print Hunter's "Under a Stolen Flag" which declared that "the gulf between Pabloite revisionism and ourselves grows wider and wider."⁷⁶ Healy pushed for a conference of the IC. When it took place in 1958, the one thing the SWP did ensure was that it did not proclaim itself "The Fourth World Congress of the FI" as the British proposed.

What did unite the IC groups in the '50s was their enmity towards Pablo and their resistance to his attempts to interfere with their national tactics. The Lambert La Verite group had been expelled by him in 1952. The British and Americans had witnessed his agents at work trying to foist a Stalinist oriented perspective on their organisations, at a time when they were working with union "progressives" in the US and left reformists in Britain. They all saw him as a challenge to the "constituted" national leaderships - i.e. Cannon, Healy and Lambert. Thus the SWP talked endlessly of the "cult" of Pablo. Gerry Healy explained to the SLL in 1966 that:

"Then, in 1951, came Pablo"⁷⁷ Actually Healy had, at that time been working closely with Pablo for at least five years. The interminable series of splits that were later to take place within the IC arose because there was no common political basis to this "anti-Pabloism". Each group had their own view of what the "essence of Pabloism" was.

For the SWP, Pabloism equalled the "liquidation" of the party, that is the organisational dissolution of the party. Whatever else Cannon proved himself willing to junk, he was determined to hang onto "the party". The problem for the SWP arose when the IS did not liquidate the FI or its sections. The barrier to unity was effectively removed. For the Healy group the essence of Pabloism was an ever changing variety of things. It was capitulation to Stalinism, failure to build parties, an "objectivist" view of the revolution. All of these assessments changed as the Healyites own activities and political positions changed, often into what had once been characterised as "Pabloite" by Healy. Thus, Healy was driven to discover the "roots" of Pabloism. His post-1959 discoveries concentrated on the question of "method" and "dialectical materialism".

Building on Trotsky's strictures to the SWP to fight against pragmatism, Healy developed an abstract "philosophical" critique of Pabloism and of the Americans' later submission to it. This enabled him to turn his back on questions of programme and tactics where his own record was so compromised that it would not bear any serious inspection. In 1966 he argued: "The differences between revisionism and revolutionary marxism today boils itself down to the differences between idealism and dialectical materialism and not what this individual or that individual is supposed to have done."⁷⁸ Very convenient for Healy! His "method" enabled him to wipe his own slate clean. But it was a far cry from Trotsky's method which always started with and returned to, *experience*, the supreme criterion of human knowledge.

For the French, the Lambert-led OCI, Pabloism was in essence neither liquidation of the party, nor a wrong philosophical method. Their initial and abiding hostility to Pabloism lay in their Stalinophobia. In their most refined definition of Pabloism, the OCI declared that Pablo's "formal" marxism and his mechanical application of Trotsky's perspectives "had its finished expression in the conception of a finished Fourth International and parties, endowed with a pyramid style hierarchy, with world congresses, of ultra-centralist status, which had only to strengthen itself progressively."⁷⁹ This definition - a systematisation and a defence of the IC's history of complete federalism - was elaborated, as usual, to suit a factional purpose. The OCI had no intentions of falling under the "democratic centralist" control of an SLL-dominated IC in 1966.

In all three groupings we find a shifting analysis of "Pabloism". The definitions produced were virtually all motivated by conjunctural, factional considerations. Of course there were a number of shared assumptions. The ridiculous idea that all evil stemmed from the person of Pablo, and that this was due to his petit-bourgeois class origins was a common thread inside the IC. This was merely a useful means of diverting attention from the programmatic issues at stake. We assess the nature of somebody's political positions first and then deduce and demonstrate the class origins of those positions. This was how Trotsky dealt with the Burnham/Shachtman faction. The IC inverted Trotsky's approach, yelling petit-bourgeois at Pablo first, and giving his political positions only scant attention second.

In sum, we can see that "anti-Pabloism" is a meaningless term, an unscientific, non-political term. To assess the worth of the IC, therefore, it is necessary to look at the separate politics of its constituent parts.

As we have shown, from 1954 onwards the SWP lapsed from a position of fighting the IS, to one of fighting to re-unify the IC with the IS. Only organisational considerations were raised as an obstacle to early reunification. Ignoring the supposed political issues of the 1953 split, the SWP hagiographer Les Evans explained: "By 1956 their public line (i.e. the IS's -Eds) became very close to that of the International Committee, and the leadership of the SWP concluded that, on the political positions on which the two sides stood, continuation of the split could not be justified. It was time to consider re-unification".¹⁰

Following this "turn" by the SWP, Joseph Hansen carried out pioneering work to show that the SWP could outdo the IS in its capitulation to Stalinism. In 1958 he crisply summed up what the IS had obfuscated with sophistry - namely that the political revolution was merely a series of reforms. In his "Proposed Roads to Soviet Democracy" he wrote: "It is much closer to reality to view the programme of political revolution as the total series of reforms, gained through militant struggle, culminating in the transfer of power to the workers".¹¹

Hansen really got his teeth into this theme after the Cuban revolution. Empirically registering the existence of an economy which was in essentials identical to Eastern Europe in Cuba, and noting the absence of a "Stalinist" leadership in the July 26th Movement, Hansen concluded that Cuba was a healthy workers' state. Strong on pragmatism, but not too hot with dialectics, Hansen decided that there was no need for

a Trotskyist party in Cuba, that Castro was an "unconscious Trotskyist" and that, therefore, the programme of political revolution did not apply to Cuba. We have dealt elsewhere with the Cuban revolution and Hansen's analysis of it.¹² Suffice it to say that Hansen "overlooked" the absence of independent working class action and organisation in the Cuban revolution - soviets, a real workers' militia, workers' control in the planned economy, etc. He overlooked the stages of the Cuban revolution during which Castro became assimilated to Stalinism, he overlooked the demobilisation of the working class consciously carried out by Castro after the Bay of Pigs invasion. In short, he held a completely anti-Trotskyist view of the Cuban revolution.

This particular piece of revisionism not only cleared the way to re-unification with the IS in 1963. It provided a theoretical justification for the guerrilla-ist turn of the USFI in the late 1960s (despite Hansen's opposition to that turn). Today it has brought the SWP to the threshold of an abandonment of even the trappings of formal "Trotskyism". Attacks on the theory of Permanent Revolution by Doug Jenness, a leader of the SWP, is a sign of things to come. The SWP is lurching ever closer to crossing into the Stalinist camp via the "Cuban road".

By 1963, with agreement on Cuba and the "Dynamics of World Revolution Today", the SWP quickly and unceremoniously cut loose from Healy and Lambert. Cannon, who had praised Healy's Labour Party work in 1962 was denouncing that same work as "Oehlerite" in 1963. A tirade against ultra-leftism was launched, and the United Secretariat of the Fourth International was formed.

The history of the IC after the desertion of the SWP in 1963 to form the USFI, and the history of the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI - CORQI) after the split between Lambert and Healy in no way represents the continuity of the Fourth International of Trotsky. It was not a more healthy current than the USFI. The topic at the heart of the split with the SWP - Cuba - was itself inauspicious. Healy and Lambert were unable to differ in method from the Hansen-Mandel analysis and were, therefore, forced simply to deny that an overturn in property relations had taken place in Cuba.

Healy and Slaughter insisted that Cuba was state capitalist, and Castro a bourgeois bonaparte like Nasser or Peron. To defend this curious and inconsistent position, they borrowed "normative" arguments from the new class theorists, and hid them under a barrage of Hegelianised "dialectics". The OCI, on the other hand, decided that a "phantom bourgeoisie" held power in Cuba, via Castro. Such positions

prevented any serious or searching analysis of the roots of the degeneration of the FI after the war. The SLL and the OCI, therefore, built into their politics different elements of the 1948-51 revisionism. Whilst the IC was united only by the hostility to the USFI, and expressed this in a vacuous "anti-Pabloism", the two key organisations within it, the OCI and the SLL, were politically very different organisations which were moving in different directions.

Each filled the vacuum of "anti-Pabloism" with its own content. To understand the later turns of these organisations, to understand the entire process of their degeneration, it is necessary to trace their history prior to the split.

The Healy group, after the 1953 split, carried on for a short period with their own version of entryism sui generis, around the paper "Socialist Outlook". From 1954 when the paper was banned, Healy had no problems in switching his group into the Tribune milieu, selling Tribune until 1957 when the group supported the launch of "The Newsletter", supposedly an independent newspaper.

After the Hungarian revolution, defections from the British CP and the creation of loose socialist forums provided Healy with a new audience and recruits. After 1957, the Newsletter also served to rally a number of rank and file trade union militants around it. The theoretical journal "Labour Review" attracted some able intellectuals. Originally, Healy had insisted that both publications were not "sectional Trotskyist publications". This was in line with his earlier "deep entry" project. The prospect of recruitment from the CP, however, modified this perspective and pushed the Healy group to more of an independent orientation. In 1959 the Socialist Labour League (SLL) was founded as an independent group, although 100 of its 159 founding members were still in the Labour Party. A relatively open and pugnacious campaign followed in the Labour Party's new youth organisation, the Young Socialists. It was led by SLL members, and resulted in the closing down of the YS and mass expulsions in 1964.

The same period had seen the SLL carrying out active trade union work, attracting 700 delegates to a rank and file conference in November 1959. The SLL also grew as a result of its active intervention within the CND. Here it dropped criticisms of the "disarmament" slogan in order to recruit, despite having levelled sharp criticisms of the IS in 1954 for having supported similar disarmament slogans.

By 1963, flushed with success, the Healy group returned to catastrophic perspectives of the type that Pablo had pioneered in 1950. The difference lay in the conclusion drawn from the imminent collapse. Healy substituted for Pablo's and his own former deep entry, a hysterical "third period" style fetishisation of "building the party". At its Fifth Annual Conference in 1963, the SLL Perspectives declared: "The problems of the British economy are so acute, and the relations between capital and its agents so full of contradictions, that the problem of power is in fact continually posed, provided there can be built a leadership".¹³ This involves a total confusion of the objective and the subjective.

A revolutionary situation in which the question of power is posed can materialise without a revolutionary leadership having been built in time to resolve the question in a communist direction. Furthermore, the suggestion that there was an immediate possibility of a revolutionary situation developing in Britain in 1963 was laughable. No matter, both parts of this formulation served to justify a dramatic turn towards "building the leadership" - an exaggerated party fetishism that was justified by the "impending catastrophe". The fact that reality repeatedly confounded this perspective was overcome by "philosophy".

That which had exorcised Pablo proved useful in exorcising reality from the SLL's perspectives documents. Such philosophy 'saved' the SLL from allowing "surface reality" (i.e. the continuing long boom and its effects on the working class) to obscure its "understanding" of the impending revolutionary crisis out of which the SLL would be ready to lead the workers. Hence the daily paper, hyper-activism and a huge turnover in membership.

Error began to turn into paranoia. Bad philosophy not only meant mistakes, it resulted in its adherents becoming enemies of the SLL, and therefore the raw material for... police infiltration. The SLL's/WRP's ludicrous elevation of "philosophy" in the name of party building, to a level way beyond the real world, inevitably produced not only sectarianism, but also twisted fantasy: "From time to time it is possible for the method of subjectivism and gossip to make an impact on cynics and tired refugees from the class struggle, but this is purely temporary... It is also very easy to exploit those tendencies who slander and gossip. The police do this constantly. They simply send agents into these groups (reference to the Cliff and Grant groups - Eds) who will be prepared to join heartily in condemning the SLL... It is simply that the irresponsible anti-SLL factional climate in their group assists the police".¹⁴ By a sleight of hand, opposition to the SLL becomes assistance to the bourgeois state - and thus absolves the SLL from political debate with its opponents.

The SLL's catastrophism led inexorably to pronounced sectarian practice. From 1964 the SLL's perspectives were coupled with a profound misunderstanding of the socio-economic roots of reformism and a grossly schematic view of the "betrayals" of the Labour and trade union leaders. These leaders were presented as being constantly on the verge of completely discrediting themselves. As a result the party had to be fully ready to take over, and could be built by exposure (ie by purely literary means) of those leaders. The united front was rejected on the spurious grounds that it was only possible between mass parties.

They defined it as "a relationship between mass workers' parties of a temporary character for the purpose of winning the masses to the communist party".⁶⁵ This was a narrow, one sided and false view of the united front. It led directly to the abandonment of organising a rank and file movement in the unions. In place of this, the SLL built the All Trades Union Alliance as its very own trade union organisation that put on impressive rallies, attracted unsuspecting militants and tried to rope them into the party.

This sectarianism was also extended to the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC). By the late 1960s, the VSC was mobilising thousands on the streets against US imperialism's slaughter of the Vietnamese. The masters of the dialectic, however, understood better the real nature of such demonstrations. In his "Balance Sheet of Revisionism", SLL/WRP "theoretician" Slaughter declared: "The content of the October 27th demonstration, the essential aim of the VSC and its political directors was, remains, the rallying together of some alternative to the building of the Socialist Labour League as the revolutionary Marxist party, and its daily paper".⁶⁶

Such sectarian hysterics did not stand in the way of profoundly opportunist politics. The Healyites supported the Mao wing of the Chinese bureaucracy during the "Cultural Revolution". They refused to recognise the struggle as one between wings of the bureaucracy with the masses being demagogically used as a stage army. After the Arab/Israeli war, the SLL began to venerate the "Arab Revolution" as part of their factional struggle with the OCI. By the 1970s, this veneration had turned the SLL/WRP and its press into the cheerleaders of the national bourgeoisies in Syria, Iraq, and most of all, Libya.

After the Iranian revolution in 1978/9, the WRP's newspaper, "Newline", became a constant apologist for the butcher Khomeini. The evolution of the SLL was a living proof of Trotsky's understanding of sectarianism, divorced from reality, leading to extreme factional irritability. This led, in the mid 1970s, to a full-scale conspiracy theory, which included an explanation of all the major problems of the FI as being the result of the activities of GPU and FBI agents in the SWP(US).

The La Verite group, later OCI, now known as the PCI, gave its own particular stamp to "anti-Pabloism". Under Lambert's leadership, the French group developed a thorough-going Stalinophobia, as an antipode to Pablo's Stalinophile revisionism. This was combined with a remarkable softness towards social democracy. Under the pressure of the Cold War, they turned to (and to this day remain active within) the anti-Communist union federation, Force Ouvriere.

Despite their "anti-Pabloism", the OCI capitulated to non-revolutionary communist forces in the anti-imperialist struggle. During the Algerian war of independence, the Lambertists supported the MNA

of Messali Hadj. The French inspired the 1955 resolution of the IC which declared: "In the person of Messali Hadj, the oppressed and exploited of the world possess a living symbol of this (anti-imperialist/working class-Eds) struggle".⁶⁷

They supported the MNA against the Moscow-supported petit-bourgeois nationalist FLN, on the grounds that the MNA had a proletarian orientation. La Verite offered to defend "the genuine Algerian revolutionaries against FLN killers".⁶⁸ Their "anti-Pabloism" thus led the OCI to support a group of vacillating nationalists around Hadj against the more consistent nationalists of the FLN. The truth was that the MNA soon became a pawn in the hands of the French government against the FLN and the national struggle. The MNA ended up in a block with the OAS. Their "working class" orientation, presented by the Lambertists as a token of their revolutionism, did not prevent them from betraying the anti-imperialist struggle. The Lambertists belatedly were forced themselves to admit this. However, it led them into a sectarian position with regard to anti-imperialist struggles. They refused to call for the victory of the NLF in its battle with American imperialism in the Vietnam war. In the 1967 Arab/Israeli war, the OCI condemned both sides as bourgeois and counter-revolutionary, and took a dual defeatist position.

A product of the OCI's Stalinophobia and softness on social democracy, was its chronic tendency to substitute democratic programmes for the Transitional Programme. In France after de Gaulle's 1958 coup, Lambert advanced "Defense des Acquis" - a strictly democratic pro-

gramme. In the colonial and semi-colonial world, the Constituent Assembly demand was turned into a strategic demand. In the 1980s this demand was advanced in a potentially counter-revolutionary way in the context of the political revolution in Poland. In Nicaragua after 1979 it was used as the central slogan, at the expense of demands focusing on building soviets and the struggle for workers' power.

Furthermore, the OCI/PCI has, in a number of cases, supported forces of reaction against Stalinism. In 1969, it refused to support the CP Presidential candidate who was then the left's main candidate against Pompidou. In 1980, they supported the pro-imperialist Mullah-led Afghan rebels against the PDPA/Soviet troops.

Flowing from these positions is the transformation of the United Front into a strategy. The OCI/PCI calls for the "unity" of the workers' parties, for a CP/SP government, which they characterise as a workers' government, for class against class. However, by using these slogans in a strategic sense, the OCI/PCI present them in purely literary terms. The "workers' government" and united front slogans bear no relation to working class action. They are passive slogans and can lead to abstentionism. Thus, where unity in action was posed in the stormy days of May 1968, the OCI raised class unity slogans as an alternative to joining the battles against the state. On the night of the barricades, the OCI held a meeting and decided to march to convince the students not to continue fighting. When the students refused, the OCI marched off, consoling themselves with chants of working class unity.

This policy was an equal and opposite response to the SLL's abandonment of the united front. Dramatically opposite, it was equally removed from a revolutionary communist position. Thus the OCI's Central Committee declared in 1971 of the united front: "It is a strategic line in the sense that it is always (that is, independent of circumstances, relationship of forces, tactical considerations in the strict sense of the word) present in a revolutionary party".⁶⁹

Finally, the OCI's inveterate hostility to any centralism in the IC indicates their essentially "national Trotskyist" outlook. Using the pretext that the FI was destroyed by Pabloism - a discovery only announced at the Third Congress of the IC in 1966 - the Lambertists insisted that democratic centralism had no place in the IC, as it was not the FI. They admitted the existence of federalism, arguing: "The SLL has had its own international activity, so has the OCI. Germany and Eastern Europe have remained the "private hunting grounds" of the OCI in co-operation with the Hungarian organisation".⁷⁰ They wanted to keep things that way so as not to come under SLL control, and keep their channels open to the "Pabloite" USFI.

Undoubtedly, it was Healy who led the IC until the late 1960s and imposed the SLL's views upon its public pronouncements. Lambert was increasingly opposed to Healy and Banda as they inclined more and more towards Third Worldism. Lambert himself would have preferred to reject the Arab revolution in favour of accommodation to Zionism (recognition of the "self-determination" of the Jewish workers). Lambert, to boost himself, sought to bring into the IC Guillermo Lora's POR of Bolivia. Healy at first stalled the 4th Congress of the IC, and then staged a split at the International Youth Rally at Essen. Healy seized on the pretext of Lora's concessions to the CP in the Popular Assembly and the two groups engaged in a ludicrous argument over whether dialectical materialism or the transitional programme was the golden calf to be worshipped by the IC faithful: "Is, or is not, the transitional programme of the FI the highest expression of Marxism?", asked Lambert.⁷¹ After the 1971 split, the IC existed solely as a backyard to the SLL (WRP after 1973), whilst the OCI set up the loose, federal OCRFI, rechristened the Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction) after a failed fusion with the Moreno split from the USFI.

The Transitional Programme of 1938 was not re-elaborated to meet the tasks of the post-war period. It was however revised piecemeal and, by 1951, systematically in a series of theses and documents which were accepted by the whole International. None of the breaks and splits from 1953 onwards has disavowed these revisions or traced to its roots the centrism into which the FI collapsed. The revolutionary, programmatic continuity of the FI was decisively broken. The task of developing a new programme based on the fundamental doctrine and method of the 1938 programme is a task which directly faces us. Only on this basis can a new Leninist-Trotskyist International be founded.



PROGRAMME TACTICS & THE PARTY

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME

The programme of revolutionary communism - Trotskyism - is a transitional programme. Its scientific character stems from the recognition of the imperialist epoch as one of transition between capitalism and socialism. In periods of imperialist crises, such as the present one opened up in the 1970s and 1980s, the immediate demands of the working class clash with capitalist priorities. Hence, direct action for such demands poses the possibility of developing into a struggle for power.

At the heart of the programme is a system of interlinked transitional demands. Every demand is linked to the struggle for workers' control and the formation of independent, class-fighting bodies. In and through these, each partial solution, each concession wrenched from the bourgeoisie, raises the political stakes. Each gain deepens the confrontation between the classes, exacerbates the crisis and poses more sharply the need to struggle for total victory.

Workers Power seeks to develop its programme in line with the method employed by Leon Trotsky. The 1938 "Transitional Programme" of the Fourth International was both a culmination and a summation of the programmatic work of previous generations of revolutionary Marxists. In its turn, the 1938 programme stood upon and enriched the earlier Marxist programmes; the Communist Manifesto, the declarations of the Bolshevik Party and the theses of the revolutionary Comintern in its first four Congresses.

The historic advance of the Transitional Programme was that it successfully resolved the programmatic problems inherited from the Second International. These problems involved the gap between the struggle over immediate and partial demands and the struggle for full working class power. The old "minimum" programme was limited to demands which did not transcend the concessions possible within the framework of bourgeois society. This programme became the property of trade union functionaries and the leaders of social democracy. The perspective of proletarian power was separated off. This "final goal" was the subject of abstract propaganda and was replaced in practical terms by the isolated tactic of social reform.

The 1938 programme bridged the gap of the minimum and maximum programmes. In developing our programme, we affirm this method. We therefore reject attempts to plunder individual demands, rip them from their place in the programme, and treat them as isolated trade union demands, robbed of their transitional content and their role as steps towards workers' control. We also affirm the premise of the 1938 programme - the crisis of proletarian leadership. For that reason we, like Trotsky, consider it essential to start from today's needs, not from the current consciousness of the working class. We also affirm the international character of the Transitional Programme. The proletarian revolution cannot be successful if isolated within the framework of national barriers.

The Transitional Programme was not a catalogue of truisms, good for all times and situations. Rather, it corresponded to a situation of acute economic crisis, impending war, the rise of fascism and the collapse of the Communist International under the dead weight of Stalinism. Thus the 1938 programme was focused upon the tasks facing the working class in the pre-revolutionary situation that would soon open up as a result of these objective circumstances. This focussing was only possible because the Transitional Programme embodied the lessons of the successes and defeats of the proletariat during the previous twenty years.

Consequently, the task of revolutionaries today is not to fetishise the 1938 programme, but to utilise its method to re-elaborate and re-focus the programme of revolutionary communism to deal with the renewed period of imperialist crisis which opened up some fifteen years ago.

The degeneration of the Fourth International resulted from the failure to re-elaborate the 1938 programme in the light of the changed conditions after the Second World War. Simple affirmation of the validity of the 1938 programme is insufficient. A new programme is needed, one which is both a continuation and a development of the Transitional Programme. An adequate programme today must accomplish several tasks. It must develop clear positions on the expansion of imperialism after the war; on the strengthening of, and renewed crises within, Stalinism; it must extend and enrich the Transitional Programme's condensed conclusion on tactics and strategy of permanent revolution in the semi-colonial world; it must re-state and further the tradition of communist work in the trade unions and reformist parties; it should excavate and develop the Bolshevik positions on the movements of the oppressed. Last but not least, today's programme must embody the conclusion of a careful analysis of the key revolutionary situations of the last period and the use and misuse of revolutionary tactics within them.

Of course, this does not mean that communists cannot intervene and give leadership to the class struggle until all programmatic work is complete. This would mean waiting forever since the communist programme is, in a sense, never complete. It is tested and corrected in the light of experience. The Comintern was able to lead mighty struggles without a finished programme. The movement for the FI attempted to shape the course of events in Spain in the 1930s before the Transitional Programme had been written. The class struggle does not wait for a finished programme. Rather, it is a constant spur to develop the programme. In no sense does this mean that revolutionaries should abandon their programmatic work - far from it. Even while attempting to chart a victorious course in Spain, Trotsky worked untiringly to re-elaborate the communist programme and lay the basis for the Transitional Programme.

Following this method, we recognise the centrality of programmatic work but constantly focus that work and the legacy of tactics and demands, that we have from the Marxist tradition, into specific Action Programmes for particular periods of class struggle, or particular sections of the working class.

In producing and attempting to utilise such programmes in the class struggle, we are using the method applied by Trotsky when he produced the Action Programme for France in 1934. We apply our overall strategy - the Marxist programme for proletarian power - to particular areas of work. An Action Pro-

gramme must therefore include all the major elements of the full programme, charting the strategy from present conditions and struggles to the struggle for state power. But it is sharply focussed to the specific circumstances facing a given section of the proletariat, or facing the whole proletariat at a given time.

It is based on a careful appraisal of the needs, political strengths and weaknesses of the proletariat.

In this way we enrich our work and practice through testing the vital programmatic work we are carrying out in the class struggle. Indeed, it is only along this path that genuine revolutionaries can construct a programme which stands upon the shoulders of Trotsky, Lenin and Marx. Only this way will it be possible to put an end to the foraging among the ruins of the Transitional Programme so characteristic of the centrist epigones of Trotsky's Fourth International.

MAJOR TACTICS IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE

The Marxist strategy - for the achievement of communism via proletarian revolution, the destruction of the bourgeois state and its replacement by a workers' state based on soviets and a workers' militia - requires tactics for its implementation. By tactics we mean the methods used for winning particular battles in the class war. Principled revolutionary tactics are therefore subordinate to the revolutionary strategy. They are those which raise the political class consciousness of the proletariat, consolidate its vanguard and prepare it organisationally for the seizure and exercise of state power.

Since the degeneration of the Comintern, the working class movement has been dominated by reformism. Since the collapse of the Fourth International, there has been no organised revolutionary cadre on an international scale. This has meant that at least two generations of proletarian militants have been educated in an incorrect, falsified understanding of the communist arsenal of tactics and their principled application as developed and codified by the first four congresses of the Comintern and the FI in its revolutionary period before the end of the 1940s.

Because incorrect tactics can lead to strategic defeat, it is of paramount importance that the tactical lessons learnt by the communist movement be re-asserted. Because the immediate practice of political groupings consists of tactical operations it is at this level that underlying strategic conceptions are first visible. For this reason the regroupment of revolutionary forces must proceed as much from agreement on the major tactical questions as from agreement on the axioms of revolutionary theory or strategy. In this category of "major tactical" questions we include those tactics which, while they can never be programmatically imperative in the manner of strategic questions such as the seizure of state power through insurrection will, necessarily, have to be included in the operations of a revolutionary party.

The united front

This tactic is applicable where revolutionaries do not yet constitute the majority of the proletarian vanguard. Its aim is to mobilise workers to gain necessary objectives and, in so doing, break them from their reformist or centrist leaders, by exposing these leaders' inadequacy even in defending elementary class interests. The method of the united front is the proposal for joint action by communists and non-communists to achieve goals which meet the felt needs of the masses. Crucially it can be used in periods of capitalist offensive against the workers, when established leaders come under intense pressure from their supporters to defend workers' interests.

To be operated in a principled fashion, the following guidelines must be observed:

- The demands of the united front are addressed to the established leaderships of the working class and to the rank and file.
- The demands must be for joint action, not propaganda.
- The communists must retain, and use, the right to criticise their "allies" at all times during the united front as well as after it, and must campaign for their own communist programme.
- The communists must break the united front wherever their "allies" shrink from or sabotage the demands and struggle for the united front.

These criteria govern all usages of the united front, from the level of the isolated local action to that of government. They govern the anti-imperialist united front, as dealt with in a previous section, and the workers' united front in the imperialist countries.

The workers' government

As well as being a description of the revolutionary government communists strive to achieve, the "workers' government" (or workers' and peasants' government) can be operated as a united front tactic in circumstances in which the question of power is posed, but when the working class remains under the leadership of reformists or centrists.

Revolutionaries would demand the formation of a government of the workers and demand that the reformists break with the bourgeoisie. We would call for a workers' government that would arm the workers, base itself on and be answerable to their councils of action and to other rank and file organisations. It would also take steps to expropriate the major capitalists and introduce workers' control of production. Only if a "united front" government took such measures could it be designated as a "workers' government"; that is, one which communists would give political support to, and under certain conditions (e.g. retaining complete independence of agitation), enter. Under no circumstances do we designate as "workers' governments, governments of social democratic and labour parties (or coalitions with Stalinist or petit-bourgeois nationalist parties) which fail to carry out the above measures.

These "fake" or "bourgeois workers' governments" are merely tolerated by the bourgeoisie to undermine and ward off the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat. To designate such governments as "workers' governments" is to dilute and confuse the communist programme and to become left apologists for the reformists.

We regard it as most improbable that reformists would form a workers' government, in a period of acute revolutionary crisis, except under the greatest pressure from an aroused working class, organised in soviets. However, as a united front demand in a critical situation, the workers' government slogan would expose the misleaders, and prepare the working class for power. In this sense, the slogan has an "algebraic" character. By this we mean that the composition of such a government is not declared as fixed in advance. If, in the unlikely event, a workers' government other than the dictatorship of the proletariat came into being, then it would merely be a prelude or bridge to such a dictatorship. In no sense is the workers' government a necessary historical stage that has to be gone through, prior to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The general strike

The general strike is the second most powerful weapon, after the insurrection, available to the working class. It is qualitatively different

from other forms of strike action in that it objectively poses the question of state power; it paralyses the functioning of society, requiring the proletariat to go beyond its normal forms of organisation. A general strike calls down the full force of the state machine on the working class which, consequently, must develop its own military capacities, its own ability to organise food supplies etc. While the general strike puts the question of insurrection on the order of the day, it is not itself the insurrection. The slogan of the general strike has to be raised where the issues confronting the working class go beyond partial or sectional questions. The initial objective of the general strike must have a class-wide relevance, even if this consists of supporting a key section of workers against a government (as happened in Britain in 1926).

However, the logic and dynamic of a general strike can take it rapidly beyond its initial objectives. Revolutionaries seek to develop this dynamic and prevent any attempts to limit the scope of a general strike once it is mobilised. This dynamic is precisely to pose the question - who shall be master of the house, who shall rule in society? While it does not, in itself, resolve this question, the importance of the general strike for Marxists is that in posing it, it can potentially open up the road to the insurrection and the seizure of state power. This is the goal revolutionaries strive for in every general strike. For this reason the general strike slogan must always be accompanied by slogans for the creation or mobilisation of the workers' organisations - militias, councils of action - necessary to allow for the revolutionary development of the potential of the general strike.

Whether or not it is preceded by a general strike, working class revolution must take the form of insurrection, the armed seizure of power by the workers' organisations, under the leadership of a revolutionary party. A central component of all tactics deployed by revolutionaries, therefore, must be the preparation of the military capacity of the working class. From the first formation of picket defence squads to the creation of armed workers' detachments and the winning-over of key sections of the regular armed forces, the arming of the working class is not an option but a necessity.

THE ORGANISATIONS OF STRUGGLE OF THE WORKING CLASS

The trade unions are the bedrock organisations created by the working class to defend and improve their living standards and working conditions under capitalism. To this extent they are instruments for domesticating the working class within capitalism. They are imbued with narrow divisions between crafts and skills. They are the base of a privileged trade union bureaucracy which has a material interest in maintaining the wage contract between capital and labour. This contract gives the bureaucracy its reason for being. It arbitrates and negotiates within the framework of capitalism. As such, the bureaucracy can be characterized as a caste, with interests distinct from the rank and file and counterposed to them.

As organisations that mobilise large numbers of workers against the employing class, the unions also have the potential of being transformed into organs of struggle against capitalism. Their craftism and bureaucratisation can be transcended. In all major battles between the proletariat and capitalism, the interests of rank and file trades unionists conflict sharply with those of bureaucrats. Only through struggle against the trade union bureaucracy can the trade unions themselves be taken into the hands of rank and file workers and their directly elected and accountable leaders, and turned into effective organs of class struggle.

We fight for the construction of democratic industrial unions in which all officials are elected, accountable and recallable, and are paid no more than the average rate of pay of their members. We fight for the formation of factory committees in every plant and workplace, representing all unions and all workers in the workplace. These factory committees need to fight to defend the interests of all workers in the workplace, and crucially, they must struggle to impose workers' control of production, as part of the struggle for socialist revolution. The struggle for control poses the question of which class rules - a question that cannot be resolved within the confines of one factory or industry. Hence we struggle to commit the unions to the struggle to overthrow capitalism and fight against those who would wish to give the unions an unpolitical, neutral or reformist character.

To co-ordinate such a struggle, and to work for the defeat and replacement of the bureaucrats with genuine representatives of the rank and file, an opposition is needed in every union and across unions. We fight to build a united front of militants against the bureaucrats. Within the trade unions, the form of the united front, in present conditions, will be a rank and file movement, a fighting alliance of rank and file militants. By this we mean that revolutionary

communists must fight alongside reformist and centrist workers, in all their struggles to defend or extend the interests of the class, placing no conditions on our involvement. However, at all times we counterpose to the methods, slogans and goals of the reformists and centrists, those of our own revolutionary action programme. In this way, we seek to build a revolutionary communist leadership in the rank and file movement, with the avowed aim of turning the trade unions into organs of struggle against capitalism.

The revolutionary struggle of the working class must break out of the confines of industrial trade union organisation if it is to succeed in smashing the capitalist state. To this end, in all major struggles, we call for and try to build, councils of action comprising delegates from workers in struggle and workers supporting them. Such delegates should be directly elected deputies and should be recallable. They must be authoritative representatives of the workplace. To ensure victory in any generalised strike action against the bosses, we urge these councils to be organised in every locality and for them to organise the armed defence of the working class through a workers' militia. In circumstances of class wide struggle, we call for the creation of a national central council of delegates from all local workers' councils to co-ordinate and lead the struggle. Conflict that has reached such a level will, of necessity, pose the question of which class rules in society. We answer that the workers must rule. They must seize power and rule through workers' councils.

Soviets can arise only at a time when the masses enter onto the road of revolutionary struggle. They can survive only on the basis of a revolutionary situation. In all the major revolutionary struggles of the exploited and oppressed, embryos of soviet-type organisation have been created. The task of revolutionaries is to extend those fighting organisations of the masses into a fully-developed soviet form.

Soviets unite the representatives of all fighting groups, and throw open their doors to all the oppressed and exploited. All proletarian political currents compete within them on the basis of the widest possible democracy. Individual delegates must be responsible to and recallable by the base units of the exploited and oppressed. The leading bodies of the soviets, in their turn, must be recallable by the soviets themselves. Only thus can the soviets be protected against bureaucratisation or incorporation into the bourgeois state.

The very existence of soviets immediately creates a Dual Power situation. By their nature, they pose the potential of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist re-construction of society. But only revolutionary communists have a programme for the final victory of the soviets. Reformists and Stalinists will seek to stamp out the embryos of soviet-type organisation, turning them either into means for re-establishing bourgeois rule (as in Russia after the February revolution and Germany in 1918), into trade union type negotiating bodies (as was the case with the leadership of Solidarnosc after the formation of the inter-factory committees), or into stage-managed adjuncts to the Stalinists as organs of so-called "Popular Power". We fight to prevent any of these forms of demobilising the masses. Soviets without revolutionary leadership will not bring about the socialist revolution. For this reason, we fight to build a revolutionary communist party with deep roots in the working class. Only with such a party at its head will the creation and consolidation of the class rule of the proletariat be possible.

THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP OF THE WORKING CLASS

The world is ripe for revolution. Socialism is on the agenda. There can be no question that in a world in which millions starve, and are deprived of the right to work, while capitalism stunts the development of the productive forces and indeed threatens the destruction of the planet in order to safeguard profits for a handful of people, that the objective pre-requisites for socialism exist. The working class, the only force that can destroy capitalism, is held back from victory over capitalism by its bureaucratic and reformist leaderships. The working masses have, time and again, moved into action against the bosses - France 1968, Chile 1973 and Portugal 1974/75 are but the most recent examples. Yet, in each case, the masses have been held in check, or treacherously turned upon, by their existing leaderships. The workers have been outflanked because within their own ranks there has not been an alternative revolutionary leadership.

Despite willingly engaging in ferocious struggles with the class enemy, on a world scale the working class has remained politically weak. It is dominated politically by agents of the class enemy, and it has not been able to defeat these agents. This political weakness creates the conditions in which bureaucracies have been able to get away with betrayals. However, in the face of attacks from the employing class, the masses have shown a repeated willingness to fightback with direct action. This creates the possibility of transcending the political weakness of the working class, by pitting the rank and file against the leaders. It creates the best conditions for smashing all bureaucratic obstacles to revolutionary struggles. The inevitable conflicts with capital that erupt are the conflicts within which a revolutionary party can and must be forged.

The mortal enemy of that party will be reformism in either its Stalinist or social democratic guise. In the imperialised world, petit-bourgeois nationalists will also prove to be the enemy of the revolutionary communist party. We have demonstrated the nature of Stalinism and petit-bourgeois nationalism and their threat to the victory of revolution. Social democratic reformism - for example the Labour Party in Britain or the Socialist Party in France - is no less an enemy of the struggle for genuine workers' power.

Social democratic reformism is the political expression of trade union negotiation with capital, and has its origins in the Second International. It has a contradictory nature; it is socially rooted in the working class - in particular its privileged strata, the labour aristocracy - but it is committed to the bourgeois state and the defence of bourgeois property relations. Social democratic parties are, therefore, "bourgeois workers' parties". The highest aspiration of social democracy is to manage capitalism in the interests of "the people". Its political strategy, therefore, is the creation and maintenance of a bourgeois democracy within which it can be elected into government. A social democratic government is totally committed to the defence of capitalism against the interests of the proletariat. Such a government is a "bourgeois workers' government".

It will drown the working class in blood either by carrying out the counter-revolution itself, as in Germany in 1918, or by politically and physically disarming the proletariat in the face of the counter-revolution, as in Chile in 1973. We reject the idea that there can be a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism. This tenet of social democratic reformism has proved itself time and time again disastrous for the working class. The working class must rid itself of reformism if it is to avoid future catastrophic defeats.

In all its forms, reformism is politically consistently bourgeois. Centrism, by contrast, is characterised by inconsistency, wavering between the needs of the proletariat and those of the bourgeoisie. In this it reflects the social position of the petit-bourgeoisie.

Centrism's vacillations mean that it can never be a stable force. It is incapable of building or evolving into a revolutionary party, because it can never develop a revolutionary programme. Faced with a decisive test of the class struggle, most especially the test of power, the choice of either/or, centrism will shatter into a thousand pieces. Insulated from this choice, centrism can enjoy long periods of existence, but in doing so it does not cease to be an unstable, vacillating force entirely capable of going over in whole or in parts to the camp of reformism and the class enemy. To become a revolutionary communist organisation, a centrist group must make a decisive break, or series of breaks, with its past centrist politics and practice.

An understanding of the direction in which a centrist organisation is moving is vital for Marxists. Is it moving to the left - in which case we should encourage it, or is it moving to the right - in which case we should denounce it? The direction and pace of its movement, of course, depends on the tempo of class struggle. Under all circumstances, Marxists make no concessions to the politics of centrism, though the tone of criticism may vary depending on the direction in which a centrist group is moving.

Centrism's fatal flaw is its faith that the historical process absolves it of the task of consciously leading revolutions. But fatalism, faith in the historical process, always leads to defeat. That is why neither left nor right centrism can ever adopt a correct, systematic revolutionary course. There can be no question that a broad centrist group is in any way a substitute for the revolutionary party.

While the working class remains under the leadership of reformism, centrism or petit-bourgeois nationalism, it will be defeated. It will remain trapped by a crisis of leadership. The socialist revolution cannot be victorious spontaneously. It is a conscious act, requiring a proletariat conscious of what it is fighting to achieve. Only if the crisis of leadership is resolved by winning the vanguard of the international proletariat to a revolutionary party, will the victory of socialism be assured. For this reason revolutionaries direct all their efforts to building a party rooted in the most class-conscious layers of the working class, those - constantly renewed in struggles as they break out - who lead the rank and file in action against capitalism and the reformist bureaucracies.

The revolutionary party is not an optional extra in the struggle for power. It is the key weapon of the working class. Countless revolutionary situations have turned into their opposite - bloody counter-revolution - thanks to the absence of a party based on the programme of communism, grouping under its banner the most class-conscious working class militants. The party sets as its tasks overcoming the unevenness of working class experience and consciousness, the fighting of bourgeois ideas within the working class, the presentation of the lessons of past struggles and the bonding together of all the fragmented struggles that spontaneously occur under capitalism. It carries out these tasks with the aim of developing a conscious and coherent offensive against capitalism.

A revolutionary party must consist predominantly of revolutionary working class militants. It must be the real vanguard of the class. Building such a party in Britain and internationally is the primary task of the Workers Power group in Britain, and of our fraternal organisation in Ireland, the Irish Workers Group.

Our programmatic work on Stalinism, social democratic reformism, centrism, the trade unions, women, and imperialism, is geared towards providing rock solid foundations for such a party. Without such foundations, all talk of a party is nonsense. As we have repeated many times, however, foundations without anything built upon them are useless. Our programmatic work is designed to win us recruits from the working class. Passive propaganda, however will not achieve this. A vigorous intervention into the actual struggles of the working class, the focussing of our programme and propaganda to those struggles, an active commitment to the victory of those struggles, however partial they may be, will win us recruits. We are a *fighting*, not a passive, propaganda group - fighting to pass beyond our present limitations of size and resources and to develop into becoming a factor in events in the class struggle. To help us achieve this goal, we urge all revolutionary-minded militants to contact us, discuss our activities and our ideas with us, and join us.

EXTRACTS FROM FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OUR PROGRAMME "PERMANENT REVOLUTION" Number 1.

General Strike

THE 1984/5 MINERS' STRIKE & THE WRP

There is another contender for the role of revolutionary party who are not at all reticent about raising the call for the general strike or offering political leadership: the Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP) and its daily paper *Newline*. The WRP has previously been a proponent of the slogan "General strike to kick out the Tories". This slogan obviously gains a sympathetic response from workers already in struggle against the hated Tories. The problem is that it is a negative slogan about the question of government. Whilst it embodies militant hatred of Thatcher, it also contains a vacuum - *who or what should replace her?* Politics like nature abhors a vacuum. Whilst the "Trotskyist" framer of the slogan may have in mind the proletarian dictatorship, the masses of still-reformist workers have in mind "forcing a general election". Scargill himself raises this perspective for the miners' strike. As a disguised revolutionary slogan it is totally inadequate. To gain power for the working class needs more than the mightiest negative act (the general strike). It needs a positive act: the armed overthrow of the bourgeois state. Thus as a "revolutionary slogan" it is misleading and inadequate.

As a reformist slogan it is a complete disaster, even if it were capable of jumping over the objections of workers imbued with illusions in parliamentary democracy. The general strike is indeed the highest form of struggle short of the direct armed struggle for power (the armed insurrection). To suggest in advance that it should be tied to the objective of a general election is to foreclose on its further development. Instead of clarifying the "question of who rules" in a revolutionary manner, it assists the reformists in translating this into a purely parliamentary question - one which will only resolve which bourgeois party will hold office, not which class shall hold state power.

In this sense an election would be a massive step backwards away from mass direct action and back onto the terrain of bourgeois democracy. It allows the atomised electorate - bombarded by the media - to decide the issue of a class battle. It exchanges the massive capital of class-wide action - holding as it does the potential for revolution - for the small change of electoral politics. It risks leaving the reformist traitors at the top of the labour movement firmly in the saddle.

This then is an ambiguous slogan. The inadequate "revolutionary" interpretation has been kept and "improved" by the WRP - as we shall see. The reformist interpretation has been unblushingly embraced by the Socialist League. Only they have trimmed the rather-too-revolutionary all out general strike to... a day of action! Indeed, they seem to have had a bad attack of calling on the TUC to "Name the Day!". Like partners to an overlong engagement, their paper *Socialist Action* has been tiresomely pleading with the TUC for three months. On 23rd March they asked the TUC to "Name the day for solidarity action with the NUM". They did the same on April 30th and several times thereafter. By May 18th they threw caution to the wind and asked the TUC to "name the day for a general strike - with the promise of further action". Let us hope the miners can hang on! *Socialist Action* may get there in the end! Yet even if it does, the goals it sets for this struggle are utterly reformist: "The labour movement must force a general election! No pact and no coalition with the SDP/Liberal alliance! For a Labour government pledged to socialist policies!"¹

This is the reality behind the radicalism of the "General Strike to kick out the Tories" slogan. It poses the election of a Labour government as the objective of the strike. We reject this entirely. A Labour government is not a higher good than the immediate goals and demands of the working class. Labour governments - even those pledged to vacuous "socialist policies" - that are not accountable to councils of action and workers' defence organisations remain bourgeois governments. There is no guarantee that the election of such a bourgeois government will lead to the fulfillment of the demands of the working class. The 1974-9 Labour government was a classic example. With the help of the

trade union bureaucracy it flouted its "socialist" pledges, demobilised the working class and proceeded to attack its jobs and services. Struggle will decide what sort of government emerges from a general strike. We struggle for a revolutionary outcome.

As we explained earlier, the demands of the general strike need to be, at this stage, clear and specific united front demands. The WRP eschew the opportunism of the SL and pose as the goal of the general strike now the kicking out of the Tories and the establishment of a "workers' revolutionary government". As early as 1983 over the NGA fine they called on the TUC to "organise a political general strike whose purpose will be the struggle for power and the establishment of socialism".²

This remarkable demand on the TUC - perhaps it is meant to expose them when they fail to carry it out! - has become even more ludicrous in the light of a WRP statement of three months later. Here we are told that "by their nature, trade unions are organs of defence of the working class and its living standards and cannot rise to the conscious revolutionary task of overthrowing the ruling class, smashing the capitalist state machine and establishing socialism".³ By May 1984 the objective of the general strike had become "to bring down the hated Tory dictatorship" which is defined as "Bonapartist".

We had always thought, along with Marx, Lenin and Trotsky that a Bonapartist regime was called into being when the bourgeois parties could no longer rule via a parliamentary majority and were obliged to rest directly on the military and the state bureaucracy, pretending to be a regime "above politics". Such a regime, whilst pretending to arbitrate between the classes in fact uses the state forces, unhindered by "normal" legality, against the working class. There can be relatively weak Bonapartistisms, which cannot totally suppress the workers' organisations, and which balance uneasily between the bosses and the workers. There can be very strong ones that crush the unions and the parties of the proletariat completely. But Thatcher's government is neither of these. It rules by right of its huge and very stable parliamentary majority. It uses this to legally repress the miners. It is a democratic (i.e. a bourgeois democratic government).

The WRP's phoney "dialectics" attempt to deny this in vain: "All the weight of Tory class laws and the actions of Thatcher at GCHQ have abolished independence (of the trade unions from the state - WP) and have made the state apparatus independent of any control of parliament - every action of the trade unions is now illegal".⁴ This is a self-contradictory tissue of confusion. Tory laws passed by parliament have apparently made the state apparatus independent of any control from parliament. When did parliament pass this emergency decree gutting itself, and above all why, since the Tories have a "rubber stamp" majority in parliament?

In fact, this politically illiterate characterisation is necessary for the fake-dialecticians of the WRP to hide from themselves a very unpalatable truth - millions of workers have illusions in Thatcher's "democratic mandate" for her anti-working class policies. It is a childish attempt to alter reality in order to fit the currently unrealisable slogan of "a general strike to install a workers' revolutionary government".

Another group to raise the question of the general strike in a confused and opportunist fashion is the Labour-oriented fragmenting "alliance" around *Socialist Organiser*. They demand an immediate "one day general strike" but argue that things are not hot enough yet for an all-out general strike. All that can be done now is to call on the TUC to "prepare for" and "organise for" a general strike. Thus on March 28th we were told "A one day all out stoppage should be called immediately. If this strategy were adopted victory would be in sight."⁵ This could lead to bigger things: "a campaign on these lines could start developing the perspective of an all out general strike. But right now what's essential is to push the dispute another few miles ahead".⁶

A few miles further on (two months to be precise) and *Socialist Organiser* was still stuck in the same old rut: "What's needed is to develop the struggle towards a general strike"⁷. Indeed, but the question is how to develop it? How to get "towards" a general strike? Well, calling for one - in every union, in every workplace - agitating and propagandising - shouting for

it outside the TUC General Council, on the mass demonstrations, might help! On the other hand, to call on bureaucrats to "prepare" a strike lets them off the hook. Every left faker on the TUC will tell you he's "organising for" a general strike or that he has a "perspective" for a strike. Indeed, many will say that it is impossible to do anything (like call out their own members) until sufficient "preparation" for a general strike has been carried out. The demand is totally unspecific. It ties the bureaucrats, and particularly the lefts, to no concrete actions whatsoever. The call to "prepare for a general strike" is a hollow one, a sign of cowardice, a refusal to fight now for what is desperately needed. It is a slogan that reflects the outlook of the union and Labour bureaucracy, not that of revolutionary communists.

Let us repeat: the call for a general strike does not contradict the everyday and immediate tasks of militant support for the miners on the picket lines, or solidarity action such as blacking and shopfloor collections. It does not replace the attempt to stimulate a mass strike wave by bringing forward each and every claim and struggle. But given the Tory laws and the greatly strengthened police picket-buster, we need the weapon of the general strike.

That weapon lies locked up and rusting, in an armoury whose key is in the keeping of the TUC. Therefore we have a duty to mobilise the mass forces of those struggling now in this dispute, in all disputes, to force the do-nothing "new realists" to let us use *our unions and funds*, to decisively help the miners to victory and to smash the Tory laws. The general strike - as an intrinsically political class-wide weapon - will enormously raise and accelerate the political consciousness of the working class. Even if it gets no further than a widespread call, this itself will have a spin-off effect in terms of solidarity and the prosecution of other sectional struggles. If it does take place it will work a sea-change on the reformist consciousness of the British working class. And when that happens, to paraphrase Engels: "There will be communism again in Britain".

Footnotes

1. Workers Power No 8 September 1979
2. Rosa Luxemburg Selected Political Writings (London 1972 p.155)
3. Leon Trotsky On France New York, 1979 p.100
4. Socialist Review May 1984
5. Socialist Action 11/5/84
6. Newline 16/12/83
7. Newline 5/4/84
8. Newline 1/5/84
9. Newline 9/4/84
10. Socialist Organiser 28/3/84
11. ibid.
12. Socialist Organiser 28/3/84



WHERE WE STAND

oppression of women. It is not men, as a sex, who developed and perpetuate this oppression, as feminists claim. Working class men are the natural allies of working class women. They are not the enemy. It is a class system based on private property in

the means of production that requires for its continued functioning the use of women as unpaid domestic labourers that ensures the continued existence of this oppression.

Only the working class can lead the oppressed masses of the planet to the achievement of this historic task. To do so requires a social revolution that smashes the armed power of the capitalist class - its state, replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, founded upon workers' councils and the armed militia of the working class.

Such a revolution must be Permanent. Whilst starting from the immediate tasks facing the workers and peasants - which in the "Third World" includes the land question and national independence - it cannot stop at intermediate "democratic" stages without the working class suffering a heavy defeat. The political power of the proletariat (in alliance with the other oppressed classes such as the poor peasants) is essential to resolve these "capitalist" tasks as well as to move forwards towards a planned economy and socialism. The latter is indeed impossible to achieve within an isolated nation. Thus the revolution must be international - its fundamental task is its extension.

The so-called "communist" countries are in fact degenerate workers' states. They are workers' states in that the bourgeoisie has been overthrown and capitalist exploitation suppressed. Yet their planned economies remain hampered by a parasitic caste of bureaucrats. This caste has usurped political power from the proletariat and pursues a counter-revolutionary international strategy - "socialism in one country". The "Communist Parties" in these states, and their supporters throughout the world, are Stalinists. While revolutionary communists (Trotskyists) defend unconditionally the workers' states, they are also a force for political revolution within them to smash the bureaucratic caste and restore or create workers' democracy based on soviets - workers' councils.

In the advanced capitalist states, the proletariat is repeatedly held back from the struggle for power by the social democratic (or Labour) parties, the trade union bureaucracy and the Stalinist parties. These bodies - whilst based on the workers' organisations - pursue a bourgeois policy, sacrificing the historic aims of the proletariat to reforms within capitalism. However, in periods of crisis, capitalism seeks to recoup these concessions and a crisis of leadership ensues in the labour movement, which the proletariat must resolve in order to win.

To this end we fight inside the workers' movement to link existing struggles - even ones for only partial demands - to the struggle for working class power. In each struggle for pay, against closures, for political rights, we fight for forms of organisation and elements of workers' control that bring workers into conflict not only with an individual capitalist, but with capitalist power, and the capitalist system. Through transitional demands the masses can find a bridge between their present struggles and everyday demands, and the tasks of socialist revolution.

On the basis of these principles we give unconditional support to all national liberation struggles, including that of the Republican movement in Northern Ireland.

We stand for no platform for fascists. Against all immigration controls. Against discrimination, deportations and harassment meted out to blacks by the police. For the right of blacks to organise in their own defence, and for the duty of the labour movement to practically assist them.

Against racism and racists in the trade unions. We fight for complete social, legal and political equality for women. Equal pay for equal work. Free abortion and contraception on demand. We stand for a working class women's movement that can fight as an integral part of the labour movement for workers' power. Only working class power can socialise domestic labour and release women from their centuries' old oppression.

We fight for the liberation of gays from the persecution and discrimination that is their lot under capitalism. We fight against the oppression and super-exploitation - via the family, the state and at work - that youth suffer.

In the unions we fight for the total independence of the trade unions from the state, for militant class policies, for immediate, partial and transitional demands which link today's struggles under capitalism to a united and coherent offensive to overthrow it.

We stand for a rank and file movement of the militant minority to win the regular election and recallability of all union officials and the fixing of their salaries at the average of their members.

We fight to build a revolutionary alternative leadership in the unions, and a revolutionary wing in the Labour Party and the LPYS as part of our fight to build a revolutionary party. Our goal, as our name proclaims, is workers' power and nothing less.

Workers Power and its fraternal allies, the Irish Workers' Group, the Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany) and the Groupe Pouvoir Ouvrier (France) are by no means yet parties capable of challenging Stalinism and social democracy for leadership across the whole range of working class struggles. We are restricted by our size to arguing for our programme, our tactics and strategy with the proletarian vanguard, who still, by and large, give allegiance either to the reformists parties or to various centrist organisations. But we seek at the same time the maximum involvement in the class struggle. We fight for our ideas whilst rendering the maximum assistance to workers in action.

As well as new revolutionary parties, the working class needs a new revolutionary international. The last revolutionary international, the Fourth, collapsed into centrism between 1948 and 1951, and disintegrated organisationally in 1953. Only its degenerated fragments exist today. What is needed is a democratic centralist international, a true world party of socialist revolution.

As a first step along this path, Workers Power with its Irish, German, French and Chilean co-thinkers has founded the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI), with the object of achieving an international democratic-centralist tendency. On this basis we can and will go further along the road to building national revolutionary parties, a revolutionary international, and the establishment of the world socialist order. ■

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation basing itself upon the programme and principles developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the nineteenth century, by V. I. Lenin and the first four congresses of the Communist International in the first decades of this century, and by Leon Trotsky and the first two congresses of the Fourth International in the years up to 1948.

Capitalism is a system based on the systematic exploitation of the proletariat. It is doomed to recurring crises caused by the contradiction between the enormous expansive powers of socialised production and the fact that private ownership determines that such production must be for profit.

The competitive struggle between capitals brings anarchy into national and world economy. Millions starve while food is destroyed to maintain prices. Commodities rot or rust unsold in a world of acute want for the majority of humanity.

In its final, imperialist stage, the major capitalist powers - USA, the EEC countries and Japan - cruelly exploit the "Third World", crippling its economic development within the limits that can realise super-profits for the great banks of Wall Street and the City of London, and the transnational corporations.

Only the abolition of private property in the large-scale means of production, and the creation of a planned economy can end forever exploitation and oppression. Only the abolition of class society can remove the root causes of the

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