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*Why the Banda School of
Falsification Should be
Buried and the Fourth
International Rebuilt*

AN ARTICLE APPEARED in *Workers' Press* of February 7th, by M. Banda, General Secretary of the WRP, under the title "Twenty-seven reasons why the International Committee should be buried forthwith and the Fourth International built".

Banda purports to deal with the question of the roots of the degeneracy of the WRP and its rump 'International Committee' (from which the WRP is now suspended), by raising the need for an examination of "the entire history of the ICFI as well as the history of the Fourth International since Trotsky's death".

What he does, however, in this extraordinary document is something else. On the basis of a whole series of unfounded and unproved assertions and crude characterisations, he rummages around the history of the Trotskyist movement.

In a completely eclectic manner, he mixes up real problems of the movement, tactical errors and mistakes, with real revisions of Marxism and crimes (such as the WRP's support for the murder of 21 Iraqi Communists). Added to this are some quite mendacious falsifications of the history of our movement, which are Banda's own.

Everything is put into one bag and mixed up. The difficulties of the organisations which formed the International Committee in 1953, who tried to fight their way out of the crisis of the Fourth International resulting from the development of Pabloism in its leadership, or the problems of the battle to re-forge the International at the end of the war, are placed by Banda on the same level as real crimes against the working class.

Banda does not just denounce the rump IC, moulded by the WRP after 1971, but denies the validity of the whole history of its struggle since 1953.

He describes the IC from 1953 as nothing more than "an empirical and subjective idealist groping by self-styled groups of so-called Trotskyists for a means of short-circuiting the historical process". At no time in the last 32 years, according to Banda, has any section of the IC been able to elaborate a viable perspective for the working class.

But Banda goes much further. He says that the Fourth International "was proclaimed but never built". Not only does he spit upon the heroic struggle of the Trotskyists in the Second World War to show the working class a way out of the imperialist slaughter, based on proletarian internationalism and the struggle for power, he goes further back to attack the International in the pre-war period. He tells us that there was really no cadre capable of sustaining the "monumental work" of Trotsky, the individual leader. One section after another, "almost every group in the Fourth International", were in conflict with Trotsky in the last few years of his life.

Undoubtedly the most significant Trotskyist Party for many years (identified in Banda's presentation with the personality of the individual James P. Cannon) was the SWP of the United States. Banda denigrates Cannon for "disgusting capitulations", "criminal betrayals" and "political cowardice", extending back to 1934 at least. The SWP, we are told, advanced a "semi-defencist" policy during the war, which was backed up by the IEC. This led, according to Banda, to the "adoption of centrist policies by many sections paralleling that of the SWP".

The root of the problem he ascribes to the alleged failure of Trotsky's prognosis of the prospects for the Fourth International after the war.

BACK TO THE POUM

The framework being erected by Banda with this document we have seen before. We saw it with the arguments of the real centrists on the London Bureau (ILP, POUM, etc) before the war who derided the Fourth International as a "one man band", and at the time opposed the struggle for leadership against the reformists and Stalinists. His presentation of the noble individual, Trotsky, struggling single-handed against every section, in a struggle that failed, leads to one conclusion: for Banda, the Fourth International has been

historic mistake, or at least a premature attempt. Everything since 1938 has been nothing but a fraud. There is for him no history of struggle for the **Transitional Programme**; there is only fraud, deception and betrayal in the name of Trotskyism.

Banda is not alone in this attitude. Groups like *Workers' Power* pretend that the Fourth International has been a failure, that until they came along with their "revelations", there has only been centrist degeneration. Sects like this inevitably draw one conclusion: that something else is required today other than the Fourth International and its programme, which has failed the test of 48 years.

The Socialist Labour Group is proud to defend the tradition of the Fourth International and is prepared to trace the political continuity of its struggle for the **Transitional Programme** back to 1938, and before that to the Left Opposition. That continuity has not been broken. We are part of it today, the foundation of the International Committee in 1953 was one of its landmarks, as was the successful reorganisation of the International at the end of the war.

Banda mentions in passing the systematic destruction by Stalinism and fascism of a large part of a whole generation of cadres. Seven of Trotsky's secretaries were murdered by the GPU. How could it be otherwise than that the young International would be weakened under this immense pressure? How could it be otherwise than that the problems encountered would lead to all sorts of difficulties and errors, comrades often having to learn the lessons of mistakes more than once?

Smart-Alec articles by the likes of Banda and *Workers' Power* come easy. More difficult is a real assimilation of the lessons of the Fourth International's living struggles and an understanding of the contradictions of its development. The method of Trotskyism in this respect is scrupulous and unsparing honesty. Marxism can give no house-room to rationalisations nor convenient falsification. For us, learning the lessons of our history is an active process with a purpose. That purpose is to better arm the vanguard of the class in its struggles.

That is why this mendacious attack on the Fourth International by Banda must be politically dissected. Its falsification of our movement's past must be exposed before the workers' movement, if the real lessons are to be brought to light.

A COVER-UP

The Banda document carries a clear implication. It purports to place the degeneracy of the WRP in a context where the whole history of the Fourth International is seen as an unending development of renegacy, degeneration and betrayal. The conclusion that Banda is inviting WRP militants to draw is transparently obvious - that the WRP isn't so bad after all. So what if its leaders committed crimes against the working class? Hasn't this been the whole history of Trotskyism? Doesn't the WRP today at least have the merit of facing this openly? Isn't he, Banda, distinguishing himself by coming clean?

WRP militants are here being presented with an underhand manoeuvre, aimed at **covering up** the crimes of its leadership by dissolving them into a gross and vile falsification of the history of the Fourth International.

Banda's statement that the WRP today is in the same position as were the Bolsheviks between 1915 - 17 underlines the nature of this fraud. Aside from the preposterous analogy implied between the WRP's rump International Committee and the 1914 Second International, the fact is that the Bolsheviks in 1915 - 17 led the fight against an historic betrayal of the working class. The WRP, in contrast, has been a leading force in the betrayal of every principle of Trotskyism since 1971. No! The WRP is not the repository of the traditions of Bolshevism and the struggle for the Fourth International. It was founded on the basis of rejection of the programme of Trotskyism.

Militants in the WRP, who want to return to Trotskyism and the struggle for the Fourth International must break from the whole of this criminal past, which is identified with their Party and its leadership, including Banda.

A SPLITTING ISSUE

It is not good enough for Banda to produce his long list of his "conflicts" with Healy, and his opposition to Healy's "opportunism". The fact is that for years Banda capitulated to, covered up for and supported things which he knew were wrong. In reality, the Healy regime was the **Healy-Banda** regime. So what if Banda voted against the cover-up of the Iraqi murders? That's not good enough. Was it not a splitting issue, this crime? Why did he not lead a struggle within the WRP? Why did he cover up this counter-revolutionary act for six years? And this man has the audacity to refer to the "political cowardice" of James Cannon!

The tradition of the Fourth International is that of the oppositionists who faced the camps of Stalin for their ideas. It is the tradition of the militants who fought to produce Trotskyist publications in the German army in the war and were executed by the Nazis. It is the tradition of the Chinese Trotskyists who spent decades in Mao's jails because they would not disavow their principles.

Talking of the Chinese and Vietnamese Trotskyists, Banda's document returns to the theme, advanced by Pablo, that they were "fugitives from the revolution". Banda has long held a position of admiration for the Vietnamese and Chinese Stalinists (General Giap and Mao's 'Red Guards').

Banda's whole document is testimony to the fact that he has not politically changed his spots. It is a new manifestation of the same degenerate anti-Trotskyism.

Briefly, we can enumerate three themes running through the document.

I

That the rump International Committee is presented as a continuation of the post-1953 International Committee.

In fact, the major part of the forces comprising the pre-1971 International Committee are now regrouped in the Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction), to which the Socialist Labour Group is affiliated along with more than 30 other national sections. Never did the old International Committee rely on finance from reactionary Arab regimes. Never did the old International Committee play any part in covering up murders. Never did the old International Committee construct monstrous fabrications against its political opponents in the style of the Kremlin, as has been done against Hansen and Novack.

Nor was the old IC a caricature of a 'world party'. The extracts from the statutes of the IC from its inception have recently been circulated to WRP members internally. Comrades will note that the IC functioned on the basis of unanimity.

The objective of reconstruction of the leadership of the international movement i.e. a leadership with political authority which was to be earned in the struggle to defeat revisionism and reconstruct the Fourth International, was clearly set by the IC. This has nothing in common with the post-1971 ICFI which functioned as an appendage of the 'leading section', the WRP, on the basis of arbitrary diktats and the most bureaucratic practices.

II

Banda's second theme is that the IC's opposition to Pabloism was a fraud from 1953 onwards. For him, Pabloism and anti-Pabloism were just different manifestations of betrayal. On the one hand, he says, Pablo adapted to Stalinism. On the other, the IC sections were adapted to reformism and the state.

The opposition to Pabloism lacked clarity and was in many respects confused. But it was not the opposition of manoeuvring opportunists who had broken with Trotskyism. The split was produced by great events in the class struggle: the French General Strike and the opening of the political revolution in East Germany. Curiously, Banda does not mention these events!

The IC opposed the liquidation of Trotskyism. Banda offers not a shred of evidence in his assertion that they opposed Pablo in order to leave the road clear for their 'capitulations' to the labour and reformist bureaucracies.

Clearly the IC from 1953 was unable to get to grips with the roots of Pabloism. It never got beyond a federation of national groups. Cannon's conception of internationalism was limited ("international collaboration"). At the end of the war the SWP failed to live up to its responsibilities of the leading section, ceding to the European leadership a group of young, inexperienced and untried people.

But weaknesses and mistakes are not the same as a consistent and hardened revisionism.

If the SWP ended back in the camp of revisionism it did so because it failed to probe to the roots of Pabloism, historically, politically and theoretically. It could not do so without drawing a balance-sheet of the post-war years and its own role in them.

Was it wrong to oppose the reunification of 1963, which was on the basis of forgetting the 1953 split (postponing a discussion until the future)? No! It was an unprincipled fusion which led to the Pabloite turn to guerrillism and the subsequent physical liquidation of their members in Latin America as they turned away from the proletariat and to isolated bands in the hills, which were wiped out by the bourgeois armies.

Does Banda disagree with the 1966 Conference documents of the IC? It is ironic that he talks of the "revisionist theory" of the OCI that "Pablo destroyed the Fourth International". This he has referred to as middle class "scepticism". In fact, the OCI said that Pabloism had destroyed the Fourth International as a centralised world organisation. At the time, Banda and Healy attacked this and peddled the illusion that the IC was the ready-made Fourth International, a substitute for the old IS. The 1966 document was entitled "The rebuilding of the Fourth International". Yet the super-sceptic Banda says the Fourth International never really existed: it was only proclaimed! What precisely does this mean? Certainly the Fourth International has never become a mass international. But what were the Trotskyists doing from the founding conference but struggling to build Trotskyist organisations? Is Banda really saying that those groups who "proclaimed" the Fourth International weren't Trotskyist, weren't revolutionary? That is the content of his miserable article.

III

Banda's third theme: the degeneracy was present throughout the Trotskyist parties, since the very foundation of the International.

Banda sees in the war years only capitulation to defencism and sectarian abstention by the sections in the face of the struggle against Nazism. Bill Hunter's reply correctly points to the fact that there was a real battle, based on the principles of proletarian internationalism conducted by the Fourth International sections.

Banda takes as good coin the arguments of Munis, the sectarian who ran out on Trotskyism, in relation to the trial of the Minneapolis 18, who were jailed by the American bourgeoisie. Yet he doesn't even bother to consider the question of how the SWP should have conducted its defence. Cannon merely commits the "greatest betrayal of Trotskyism" in the trial. Really? Even greater than Banda's cover-up of the murder of 21 Iraqi Communist Party members for six years?

ATTACK ON TROTSKY

Banda's vitriol against the American Trotskyists is necessary from the point of view of his central thesis - that the Fourth International was still-born. For the SWP played a formative role in the early years and in the reconstruction of the International at the end of the war. Certainly, the weaknesses of the SWP were central in terms of limiting the ability of the International Committee to get to grips with Pabloism. But Banda does not make any serious attempt to deal with these. Instead, he asserts that the SWP (identified by Banda with the individual, Cannon) was making "disgusting capitulations" as early as 1934!

Banda refers, as if it were given fact, to the "disgusting accommodation" to Norman Thomas and the US Socialist Party in 1934-35. He doesn't specify what this disgusting accommodation was. But one thing is clear. This is an attack on Trotsky, as well as Cannon.

The entry into the Socialist Party - which involved dropping the Trotskyist publication (with Trotsky's agreement) which was a risk and an exceptional measure - was a political success, not a liquidation. It secured two things. It finished off the Socialist Party as an attractive force to trade union militants. And it secured the doubling of the Trotskyist forces. The entry lasted one year. The Trotskyists took over the organ of the Socialist Party in California and used that for their purposes. The SWP was the leading section of the Left Opposition at this time. Banda labels it as opportunist as early as 1934. This can only have the logic of writing off the Fourth International and its foundation.

This is the real content of Banda's article. He writes off everybody except Trotsky. He gives a view of Trotsky fighting against virtually every section. He is really smuggling in the view of the centrists of the 1930s (the London Bureau) that the Fourth International was nothing but a "one man band". He dismisses a whole generation of revolutionaries.

Bill Hunter quite correctly asks the question, if the Trotskyist programme could only draw around a collection of opportunists and political cowards as Banda says, does not that raise questions about the nature of that programme? What Hunter implies but does not spell out is that Banda's hysterical polemic into his past leads only in one direction: the founding of the Fourth International was a hopeless task, without a revolutionary cadre. Banda will end up in the company of the ghost of Isaac Deutscher who dismissed the last years of Trotsky's life as the quixotic efforts of an old man who had been politically thrown off course.

Banda attacks Trotsky once more when he condemns the 'Military Policy' outlined by the SWP leaders. This was an interpretation of the resolutions of the 1940 Emergency Conference of the Fourth International, drafted in discussion with Trotsky himself. Comrades will find detailed discussions between Trotsky and the leaders of the SWP on the question of how they should conduct themselves in face of militarisation and the prospect of war.

Trotsky was concerned to put forward a military policy, based on the independence of the working class from its own imperialism, yet not giving one inch to the accusation that the Fourth International stood for the victory of Hitler. In Britain, the WIL supported the general orientation of the SWP.

There was controversy over this line, raised especially by the official British section, the RSL, which was never fully resolved. This whole question has been reviewed in the *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, published by the Leon Trotsky Institute in Paris, by Joubert and Broué. What is clear from a study of the actual activity and positions of the Trotskyists at that time, is that the parameters of that discussion were within the framework of a discussion of how to apply transitional demands.

In the circumstances of the war and the disruption of the Fourth International, what is remarkable is that the sections of the International were able to display such a firmness of principle. This is not something to denigrate. Rather, real Trotskyists should be and are proud of this tradition.

It's all very well for Banda to rush into a controversy of this kind, treading a path well-worn already by the Spartacists. At least they back up their assertions with the odd phrase snatched out of the wartime writings of Cannon or Ted Grant. Banda hasn't even provided a few loose expressions or out of context quotes. Perhaps he doesn't know where to find them.

Underlying Banda's document is the position that the source of the problem lies with Trotsky himself. If entry into the Socialist Party was a "capitulation", if the war policy was a "betrayal" and if sowing dragon's teeth only "reaped fleas", what other conclusion can be drawn?

TROTSKY'S PROGNOSIS

For 48 years, apparently, thousands of militants have in vain been struggling to maintain an illusory fantasy that "the Fourth International lives and fights" and that its cadres represent "pledges for the future".

Banda talks of Trotsky's prognosis having been confounded by post-war developments. But Trotsky the Marxist knew the difference between a political prognosis and the predictions and wishful thinking of idealists. He presented the prospect of "decades" of struggle for the victory of the proletarian revolution:-

"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. A young revolutionary party must base itself on this perspective. History will provide it with enough opportunities and possibilities to test itself, to accumulate experience and to mature. The swifter the ranks of the vanguard are fused, the more the epoch of bloody convulsions will be shortened, the less destruction will our planet suffer. But the great historical problem will not be solved in any case until a revolutionary Party stands at the head of the proletariat. 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." (Trotsky: *Manifesto of the Fourth International*, May 1940.)

It is this perspective of Trotsky's that every development of revisionism has sought to undermine. The essence of the destruction of the Fourth International as a centralised world party by Pabloism, was to abandon this historic task and search for other forces to do the job. The emancipation of the working class for Pablo was no longer the task of the working class.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL LIVES AND FIGHTS

The continuity of the Fourth International has not been broken since 1938. It resides in the unceasing struggle of militants and organisations to fight on the basis of the 1938 programme, despite the fact that this fight has been distorted and hampered at every step by the consequences of revisionism. The continuity is also expressed by the fight of those organisations impelled to defend Trotskyism against revisionism: firstly the PCI and then the SWP and British section in founding the International Committee.

Of course there was no "pure" break with Pabloism. How could it be otherwise than that the problems caused by the development of revisionism in the leadership of the Fourth International would continually raise problems in relation to the struggle of every section?

But the fight for the IC was a real fight. For Banda it represented no more than "an empirical and subjective groping by self-styled groups of so-called Trotskyists for a means of short-circuiting the historical process".

Rubbish! It was not the 'bad man' Cannon versus the 'bad man' Pablo. The foundation of the IC was a response to Pablo's betrayal of the East German proletariat and the French workers in 1953. It was a response in defence of the very existence of Trotskyist organisations.

Likewise the SLL and OCI's battle with the SWP in the early 1960s was a continuation of this same fight. So was the document *Under a stolen flag* by Bill Hunter in 1958. So was the Perspectives document *World prospects for socialism*. So was the resolution on *Re-building the Fourth International* in 1966. They express the same strategic line that Trotsky fought for.

No! The Fourth International is not dead. It is being reconstructed in the daily work of Trotskyist organisations, intervening in the giant revolutionary developments which characterise our epoch. The *Transitional Programme* enters the consciousness of the masses through the work to construct Trotskyist organisations. In this, the lessons of the fight against Pabloism are an invaluable weapon for the construction of sections of the Fourth International which Banda's confusions will not be allowed to obscure.

ATTACK ON BOLIVIAN TROTSKYISM

Banda makes reference to Bolivian Trotskyism at two points in his document. In point 17, he talks of Cannon, Pablo and Healy protecting and defending "the

Menshevik Lora's line of political support for Lechin and confidence in the bourgeois-democratic MNR government of Paz Estenssoro". Later on (point 24), he speaks of "Lora's treacherous role in the 1971 Bolivian uprising".

When Banda talks of the problems of Trotskyism in Bolivia, real Trotskyists will not let him get away with besmirching our movement, using phrases like "coteries of petty-bourgeois dillettantes" and other epithets against the militants of the POR.

Trotskyism has a long record of struggle in Bolivia, with a deep implantation in the working-class, principally among the tin miners. Since its formation in 1934, the POR was built in incredibly difficult conditions. Wild swings in the political situation leading to fierce periods of repression are a permanent feature of the class struggle in Bolivia. The POR built itself facing problems of this kind, and also succeeded in the difficult work of organising workers who in their daily conditions of life are ground down and brutally oppressed and exploited in the mines. How do you take theory to militants, develop theory in a party where illiteracy is a massive problem among party members, whose life expectancy is no more than 35?

REAL CONTRADICTIONS

The contradictions in the POR's development have been real enough. On the one side, as a party they succeeded in achieving great advances in organising in the miners; in popularising the **Transitional Programme**; in having a massive impact on the workers' movement as a whole - the programmatic foundations of the Miners' Federation, **The theses of Pulacayo**, were drafted by the POR.

This must be set against a great tendency for all the pressures on this party, arising from the backwardness of the country, and its national isolation to be expressed in the policies of the Party.

Mistakes have been made, yes! But in particular, Lora has made self-criticisms. The POR had to pay for its mistakes in the blood of its militants. It could not afford the luxuries of degenerate sects in the relatively easy conditions of metropolitan countries, who were enabled to wallow in their degeneracy without a hint of recognition of their own fallibility.

Again, Banda comes back, not to an evaluation of the living problems of the Bolivian Party, but to the individual, Lora. In relation to 1952, was there a bourgeois-democratic revolution or not? Tell us, Banda, exactly what tactics and line of the POR were wrong, both in 1952 and 1971? What alternative would you have proposed? Where were the attempts to correct the line of the POR? In relation to the Paz government and that of Torres in 1971, are there or are there not, in backward countries, conditions in which Trotskyists would defend a bourgeois-national regime against fascist and imperialist reaction? What about the complex tactical problems which Trotskyists must address themselves to, which arise out of the tendency for the first stages of a revolutionary mobilisation to flow through the established organisations? Was this not the case with the movement of 1952 and the MNR?

How dare Mike Banda characterise militants who have fought for their class and put their lives on the line in the name of Trotskyism as Mensheviks? For sure, Lora has never taken a penny from any bourgeois-national regime. The same cannot be said for the WRP under the Healy-Banda leadership.

A REAL BETRAYAL

However much Banda may denounce the policy of Lora, we think it necessary to put another crime on the table for WRP militants to consider. In 1971 the Banzer coup bloodily crushed the Bolivian workers. It was backed and armed to the teeth by the CIA and its torturers were trained by the Green Berets. The WRP leadership seized upon the mistakes (both real and imagined) of the POR to denounce it as the force chiefly responsible. It chose Tim Wohlforth and the organ of the US Workers' League to do the axe-job on the POR and engineer a split in the IC. **Not one word** of condemnation of US imperialism and its role in

crushing the Bolivian masses. **Not one single act**, resolution, formal protest, in defence of the worker militants of the POR. Complicity? Yes! Complicity resulting from silence, expressing failure by the WRP under Healy-Banda to defend the Bolivian working class and Bolivian Trotskyists.

Lora is now, at the time of writing, in jail for his activity as a militant. He is held by the regime against a ransom of \$9000. Despite many disagreements with the POR's tactics, the SLG is engaged in a campaign to secure his release. Will the WRP now do likewise?

RESPONSIBILITY OF PABLOISM

Banda writes out of history the real problems of the 1952 Bolivian revolution. These were concentrated in the fact that the mistakes and problems of the POR were bound up with the liquidationist orientation of the Pabloite leadership of the International, to which the POR was subordinated. Resistance to the Pabloite line of adaptation to the MNR was expressed in the internal crisis of the POR and a factional struggle, in which, within limits, Lora played a real role.

To dismiss this as nothing more than the conflicts between 'cliques' is to put up an obstacle to those who want to draw the real lessons of the struggle of the FI. What is more, it is to absolve Pabloism from its critical responsibility.

When Trotsky was assessing the policy of the Chinese CP in the 1920's, his method, distinct from that of Banda, began not with ascribing blame to the Chinese Communist Party, but sought the roots of the problems and errors in the orientation imposed by the leadership of the Third International. By mixing up the Pabloites with those who fought Pablo, including Lora, Banda prevents the real lessons being drawn and leads to the conclusion that we must blame the Bolivian Trotskyist militants for their own difficulties.

A DOWNRIGHT LIE ON ALGERIA

In his sweep around the globe, no organisation comes in for more venom than our French sister organisation the Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI, formerly known as the OCI).

We are told by Banda that it is "a completely chauvinist and discredited group occupying a position on the extreme right of the French labour movement" and "a reformist and pro-imperialist organisation".

Banda argues that the PCI and the IC itself, made a fundamental capitulation to French imperialism over Algeria. The PCI is quite able to look after itself against Banda's ridiculous assertions, which portray their policy completely falsely. Here we will just nail a couple of downright lies on Banda's part. He says that "To this day neither the PCI(OCI), SLL/WRP or the IC have re-examined this shameless and tragic experience".

In 1970, the PCI published a book entitled 'Some Lessons of our History'. In this, they reviewed from the standpoint of the tasks of re-building the FI and the building of its French section, the lessons of their own history, including past political mistakes.

Our French comrades have written about their **real policy**, which involved problems arising from the crisis and havoc wrought by Pabloism in our movement and which does not amount to "shameless betrayal":-

"The policy of 'opposition' before 1950 resulted in the crystallisation, without anyone being aware of it, of a policy of applying pressure to the traditional organisations, which excludes the independent activity of the revolutionaries and by the same token makes impossible the construction of the revolutionary party. The working class axis of the majority had no doubt largely freed themselves from these positions by their direct participation in the class struggle in France. But even after the split, they did not consciously apply the lessons of their activity and could not draw from it all its general theoretical implications.

"These inadequacies were to be revealed in the intervention of the Trotskyist fraction in the Algerian revolution.

"From one side, the Trotskyist fraction had always thought that the real 'help' of the proletariat in a

metropolitan country to the oppressed people was above all to develop the class struggle in the oppressor country. On March 12, 1956, the Trotskyists were the only tendency in the workers' movement to call on the proletariat to demonstrate against the 'special powers': earlier the MNA, on the initiative of the Trotskyists, had been led to intervene publicly in the strikes at Nantes in August and September 1955. In this way the link was correctly established between the class struggle in France and the anti-imperialist struggle in Algeria.

"But from another side, the problem of the **revolutionary leadership** in the Algerian Revolution was posed in a completely mistaken way, and this was the root of the mistakes. The MNA was not thought by the Trotskyists to be a party of Bolshevik type. But it was thought to be a party which had a programme bringing together in part the elements of a revolutionary programme. The Trotskyists at that time believed that it would have to go through a series of changes and internal crises and, under the pressure of Marxist intervention, would transform itself into a party of Bolshevik type. This was a complete error in method.

"The fact is that the MNA, like the PPA before it and the MTLD after it, were not constructed on the 'Programme' of the Fourth International and on the method of Marxism. The MNA came out of a populist party of the extreme left. It could not become the crucible of the revolutionary party. However radical some of the positions of the MNA were, and however correct were the comparisons made by the Trotskyists between the policies of the FLN and those of the MNA, between 1954 and 1958, it was completely wrong to abandon the struggle for the selection of a Marxist vanguard within the MNA, for a Trotskyist fraction.

"But the theoretical roots of the mistake were to be sought deeper. They lay in a failure to assimilate the permanent revolution. The fact is that the perspectives of the Algerian Revolution were correctly established in an article published at the beginning of 1955. But the conclusion of the article was completely wrong. It characterised the existing social forces, in relation to the extraordinary weakness of the Algerian bourgeoisie ('musulman'), and talked about a 'people-class', which the article identified with the proletariat.

"Weak as the Algerian bourgeoisie was, it was still a social force, the power of which was considerably strengthened by the support of world imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy. A 'people-class' does not exist, never has existed. There are classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Like the FLN, the MNA represented petty bourgeois formations, the bourgeois content of which, because they were incapable of taking on the tasks of the permanent revolution, was revealed with the absence of a workers' party.

"The fact remains that our organisation supported the struggle of the Algerian people. In 1955 it undertook the defence of the Algerian militants of all tendencies (MNA and FLN). It played an active part in the committee for the liberation of one of the leaders who started the insurrection, Ben Boulaid. It refused its political support to the FLN, which, with Ben Bella, was to mount the most brutal attacks on the Algerian trade union centre, the UGTA.

"Thus the French Trotskyist movement took up a position in its struggle to defend the Algerian Revolution which from the standpoint of method was identical with that of Pablo. However, one difference has to be pointed out, and it is not a small one. The Trotskyist organisation managed to carry through a complete correction on this question. The capitulation of the MNA in 1958 revealed mercilessly the petty bourgeois nature of its leadership, and the Trotskyists did not hesitate for a single instant to break finally with it.

"The re-evaluation which the Trotskyists were led to make was made more easily because before 1958 their position in relation to the MNA had been in contradiction to their policy in the class struggle in France, that is, the struggle on the basis of the programme for the selection of the revolutionary vanguard in order to destroy the petty bourgeois apparatuses.

"To become aware of this distortion, to analyse its causes and to give to it its political importance and significance, were all militant acts which were to lead the Trotskyists to make a turn. At the same time - and this was ultimately linked to the turn - a new relation of class forces had been reached in France with the coming of De Gaulle to power.

"This was the moment when the most important lessons about Pabloism and the history of the Trotskyist movement since 1929 could be drawn, as to the real significance and the place of the construction of the Marxist workers' party, as the highest expression of consciousness, that is, of the 'Programme', which formulates it and of the class struggle which produces and feeds it.

"To sum-up, it is sufficient to say that between 1952 and 1958 there were in fact two political lines co-existing side by side in the ranks of the Trotskyists, and the militants were very far from being fully aware of this."

From 'Some Lessons of our History': 1970 pp 88/89.

This self-criticism was made publicly and discussed before an audience of 2500 at a meeting in Paris. It was a product of the work of a Communist Organisation which has a tradition of taking its own mistakes seriously, not hiding them either from its militants or the working class.

Banda knows all about this self-criticism, since he was at that time in the same International movement as our French comrades. Either the man is a charlatan and a fraud, or perhaps he was too concerned at the time in constructing a "philosophical" smokescreen to avoid a real political discussion in the IC, to take note of what the OCI was doing.

AGAIN, PABLOISM OBSCURED

The reference to his being in a minority over Algeria looks pathetic in this context. Again, we find here a reference to Pablo "being on the right side of the barricades". Banda once more tries to obscure the criminal consequences of the development of revisionism. Pablo's policy on Algeria must be assessed as part of a whole orientation expressing abandonment of the revolutionary role of the working class and the struggle for Parties of the Fourth International.

An honest assessment of the record of our French comrades would set their mistakes in the context of their struggle against Pabloism. The French Trotskyists (not just the individual, Bleibtreu) took up this fight earlier than anyone else in the International. This was not because they possessed any special qualities. Rather, it was because the French section was confronted in practice with the prospect of liquidation and destruction of their Party which "sui generis" entrism posed. It is **this** the defence of the very existence of their Trotskyist organisation which impelled them to fight. For Banda to reduce the French comrades' fight against Pablo to one which was forced by the inconvenience of following Pablo's orientation, since it would militate against an alleged relationship with 'reformist allies', is mendacious in the extreme. This assertion of Banda's reduces Pablo's orientation to one of a simple opportunist adaptation to the Stalinist parties in tactics. In fact, as the PCI argued at the time, and Lawrence and Mestre showed in their practice, 'sui generis' entry into the Stalinist parties was a form of direct liquidation of Trotskyism. Banda again obscures this and in doing so, performs a service on behalf of all those who want to deny the significance of the battle against Pabloism.

THE OCI

Banda says that De Gaulle's coup of May 1958 "only accelerated the decomposition of the OCI" and that it sank into "treacherous inactivity" with a "capitulation to the Bonapartist dictatorship". Banda tries to pretend that the OCI leaders presented 1958 as representing

such a defeat that "nothing could be done except prepare for illegality!" Again we are dealing with barefaced and vile falsification.

The PCI was reduced to less than sixty militants at the time, a consequence of the destructive effects of Pabloism. Between 1958 and the mid 1960's, it built itself into a solid organisation of several hundred militants. Unlike the WRP under Healy-Banda it never fantasised about 'imminent coups'. The Bonapartism of the Fifth Republic is real enough. The coup of 1958 did represent a significant defeat for the French working class; does Banda maintain otherwise? De Gaulle's coup, based on the conspiracy of army officers, did not go all the way to dictatorship, above all because the reformists and Stalinists gave their seal of approval to the Fifth Republic. It did undermine the trade union rights of the working class and it created political conditions where the response of the working class was contained for a decade. Both the collapse of the SFIO and the crisis of the PCF were linked to this service performed on behalf of the French bourgeoisie, by the apparatuses.

Unlike the picture Banda presents, the French Trotskyist organisation systematically built itself in these conditions, preparing to make a decisive advance with the General Strike of 1968.

Banda makes a string of assertions that the OCI "betrayed" the General Strike of 1968, that it "failed to raise transitional demands", and did not call "for the overthrow of the Fifth Republic" or the formation of a CP-SP Government or even advocate the formation of committees of action and factory committees".

Comrades who want to know the truth will be able to determine for themselves by reading F. deMassot's book on the French General Strike, and the congress documents and articles of the PCI's journal *La Vérité*, where the lessons of the '68 strike, the strengths and mistakes of our Party's struggle are examined honestly in a critical, communist fashion. Suffice to say here, there is a wealth of material to refute Banda's assertions, down to reproduction of leaflets issued by our party locally and nationally during the struggle.

At the heart of the OCI's intervention was the **transitional demand** for the centralisation of the strike committees, as the basis for counterposing the working class as a class to the bourgeoisie and the Fifth Republic. In this movement the French Trotskyists projected a real way in which the working class could challenge for power, against the reformist and Stalinist apparatuses who sought to prevent the unification of the class and the development in a soviet direction of the forms of organisation produced in struggle. NO! The French Trotskyists did not give one inch to the project of the apparatuses, especially the Stalinists who sought to liquidate the strike in favour of bourgeois elections.

Indeed, British Trotskyists can profit from a study of the way in which the PCI/OCI has built an organisation of more than 6000 today from the wreckage left by Pabloism and against the wrecking of the IC by Healy and Banda. The PCI is stable, has a solid cadre and a reputation for firmness on principles. It is an organisation which has nothing to hide about its history from the working class and which is able to profit from its understanding of the United Front method, in mobilising in common with thousands of workers who do not yet accept the Transitional Programme but are being convinced on the basis of their experience of the correctness of that programme as fought for by the PCI.

BRITISH TROTSKYISM

When Banda turns his attention to the history of the British Trotskyists, we find no less of a jumble of half truths, falsifications and mystifications.

He denigrates the work in relation to the Bevanites in the late 1950's. He talks of Healy "withdrawing from the Labour Party" with the foundation of the SLL, in order to preserve his own "centrist political base". He says that the British section, after 1956 represented a "syndicalist trend....pragmatically

combined with articles from Slaughter, Kemp and others on Marxism".

In fact, the founding documents of the SLL expressly stated the perspective that the road to building a Trotskyist Party in Britain could not bypass the struggle in the Labour Party. Trotskyism successfully defeated Behan on this issue, when he wanted to launch an "open" Party and abandon entry work. In fact, 1959 marked a deepening of the presence of the SLL in the Labour Party, with the battle taken up in the Labour Party youth movement.

What was the "centrism" then, in Healy's political base? Was it the "syndicalists" or was it the intellectuals writing "articles on Marxism"? Banda does not say. With these methods, nothing can be learned from the history of our movement. By using them Banda turns historical study into gibberish.

In passing, Banda refers to "all the SLL youth comrades" being pulled out of the Labour Party in 1965, handing the youth over to the "Militant". He says this proves that "Healy and the IC never understood Social Democracy and the development of the history of the British working class". Banda here seems to be a late convert to recognising that a great error was made concerning the withdrawal from the Labour Party. Why didn't he say so at the time? Or at any time in the twenty years since then?

Again, we find that Banda now condemns the very foundation of the WRP and the daily paper - "if the revolutionary party didn't exist, it had to be invented", he now tells us.

Are these genuine signs of recognition of an abandonment of the methods of the Transitional Programme and a correct orientation to the mass movement? No! For in his next breath the same Banda condemns those in the OCI, the Bulletin Group and the Thornett opposition who raised these very problems.

He says that this opposition "completely revised the Transitional Programme" - not that the political line of the WRP was remotely based on this programme, either then or since. Those who fought Healy-Banda were "backward syndicalists" and "defectors". Hold on! These "defectors" were bureaucratically expelled in defence of the anti-Trotskyist line of the Banda-Healy apparatus.

Why isn't Banda prepared to condemn what he did and wrote in 1974-5? Because he tries to separate himself, throughout his text, from Healy, when, in fact, he was Healy's leading lieutenant. That is the whole purpose of the document.

HEALY'S RIGHT HAND

For honest militants, the people responsible have to be named. How they were implicated needs to be spelled out. Apparatchiks who were part and parcel of this degenerate and corrupt regime, cannot suddenly be transformed into revolutionaries simply because one old man has been thrown out.

Those who were centrally involved in this corruption for so long, who were centrally involved in the break from Trotskyism and acquiesced in corruption have no right to put themselves forward as leaders.

Not everybody who commits a crime is irreformable. But those in this apparatus who honestly want to break with their past have to prove themselves to the working class in the class struggle. It is not a question of atonement, nor of theoretically explaining what happened. We are dealing with a corrupt and revisionist regime, totally separated and isolated from the working class. Banda's responsibility is second only to that of Healy. His document is dishonest because it tries to smuggle in the idea that he has always fought Healy's opportunism. In reality he was Healy's right-hand man.

The SLL/WRP did not have state power. Nobody faced death (as did the Left Oppositionists) by opposing Healy. They participated in anti-communist practices which they knew were wrong. They allowed Healy to abuse them. They were corrupted by these methods.

Who will believe Banda when he heaps all the blame on Healy?

To bury the present-day IC is necessary. But all those who seriously want to build a Trotskyist

International will have to bury Banda's document. Defence of Trotskyism requires the political defeat of Banda's junking of the FI.

RECONSTRUCT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Indeed Banda's whole method in dealing with the problems of the International is to skip about from country to country, estimating the problems of Trotskyism in terms of the "perfidy" of this or that national leadership. This is illuminating in that it reveals the basically nationalist conception that Banda has of the International - that it is the sum of parts. No! The history of the FI is not the addition of national organisations, each with their own tendencies and weaknesses. The central problem, which is at the heart of the crisis of the Fourth International since 1951-3, is

the destruction of its centralised leadership by revisionism. This exacerbated all the tendencies towards "national" orientations and inevitably led to big mistakes by some parties. But the method of Marxists is not to draw together a sweeping review and criticism of the past as a set of "objective" and dead events.

We study the history of our movement as active participants in making that history, in seeking to reconstruct the Fourth International.

This involves, centrally, overcoming the consequences of Pabloite revisionism. To do this we must recognise those consequences and we must base ourselves on all the positive aspects of the struggle against Pabloism. Banda's whole document is an obstacle to that process.

By Michael Keene and Sam Stacey 18/2/86

WHO WE ARE

The Socialist Labour Group was founded in 1979. It is the British section of the Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction), which has organisations in many parts of Europe - both east and west - Latin America and Africa. The largest section is the French PCI with over 6,000 members.

The origins of the SLG are twofold - in the Bulletin Group which waged a principled and single-handed battle against the degeneration of the Healyite WRP in the early 1970's. Indeed the SLG traces its continuity further back to the best traditions of the SLL of the 1950's and 1960's, when that organisation was still a genuinely revolutionary current leading important sections of the mass movement. The SLG also traces its origins to the fight against liquidationism inside the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International (In Britain, the IMG/Socialist League) when in 1979 the USec leadership closed down all its sections in Central America and provoked an international split in its ranks which led to a profound realignment of the world's Trotskyist forces.

The SLG seeks, on the basis of Trotsky's Transitional Programme, to build a Leninist Party that can lead the working class to the seizure of state power and the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. The SLG does not claim to be that party. On the contrary, we believe that such a party can

be built only through a process of splits and realignments in the organisations which claim to adhere to the programme of Marxism, and more fundamentally, through profound upheavals in the mass organisations of the working class itself. The SLG fights inside the organisations of the working class for its political positions.

The Fourth International (ICR) is a campaigning international. The touchstone of its sections is proletarian internationalism. It has helped to organise a European campaign of solidarity with jailed miners in Britain and Poland. It wages a world-wide campaign for the unconditional defence of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua against imperialist attack. Its record of campaigning for the victims of Stalinist repression in

Eastern Europe and the USSR is second to none.

Just as the SLG does not claim to be a ready-made revolutionary party, so the Fourth International (ICR) does not pretend to be a fully reconstructed Fourth International. We recognise that there are several organisations that claim to be Trotskyist, the direction of whose development is being strongly influenced by the class struggle itself. The SLG and the Fourth International (ICR) welcomes both thorough political discussion and clarification with these organisations as well as joint activities on immediate issues where possible. The SLG fought sectarianism in the WRP and it continues to do so today in its fight for the principled reconstruction of the Fourth International.

Socialist Labour Group

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