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*A Trotskyist Analysis
of the Splits in the
WRP and the
Socialist League*

FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST

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Delegates to the Third Conference of the International Committee held in London in 1966.

The Tradition of Lenin and Trotsky

The struggle to build an international revolutionary party within the working class is now one hundred and twenty years old, if we take the founding of the First International in 1864 as its starting point. From the start this giant effort proceeded through battles around the formulation of a theoretical and methodological line to be carried out in practice - Marxism. Disputes, for the defence, clarification and development of the theoretical armoury of Marxism, organically linked to material steps forward in the mass movement, are part of the living history of our movement.

It seems fashionable among semi-academic socialists to deride Trotskyism as a doctrinaire, sectarian current, which places its world outlook above pragmatic support for what they term 'real steps forward'. To their discredit, some who take this revisionist line label themselves as Trotskyists. Such would appear to be the sorry evolution of John Ross and Brian Grogan, the two main leaders of the Socialist League.

Along this road one of the main gains of Marxist theory in the twentieth century - Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution - is being discarded by the mentor of Ross and Grogan, Jack Barnes of the American SWP.

It is inconceivable to think of building a new revolutionary international, the Fourth International, outside of the method of Permanent Revolution. Such theoretical underpinnings of our movement are not dreamed up arbitrarily, they correspond to the great practical problems of class struggle.

REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

These great problems present Trotskyists with a need to continually carry the fight on the theoretical plane, which Marx identified as one of the major fronts of class struggle. Differences over method and line, over strategy and tactics, are not secondary squabbles. They carry within them the lessons of the past and the tasks of the future.

Forging the revolutionary party has never been simply a linear process of slow, evolutionary growth.

It is within the vanguard of the working class, especially within its most conscious component, Trotskyism, that the sharpest political and organizational conflicts occur. The current splits in the WRP and the Socialist League are based not only on objective processes. Conflicts have arisen between the needs of the working class and revisionist and idealist positions held by the WRP and Socialist League leaderships. We regard, in this sense, the defence of the gains of Marxism as part of defending the real interests of the working class.

Marxism is a conscious active movement. It cannot stop its activity when the class struggle is on the ebb, to 'pick up its tools' when events are on the rise. Neither can it drop aspects of historical experience which are 'inconvenient' at a given moment. This is to reduce things to the type of empiricism so typical within British reformism.

There are certain long term historical and strategic problems which still determine the future of any grouping in Britain. Firstly, internationalism, not on the abstract plane, but in terms of the Fourth International. Any current which asserts that the Fourth International is already in existence is walking on clouds. The International split over fundamentals in 1953, and if we take the two strands which divided, then we find that what eventually became the 'Unified Secretariat' is now again dividing into several segments over equally fundamental issues, and that the old International Committee, which the WRP sprang from, has only a handful of small sections. The majority of forces from the old ICFI are now firmly in the camp of the FI(ICR), to which the SLG belongs.

Secondly, a revolutionary movement cannot be built in Britain through standing on the sidelines of the Labour Party. Comrades of the WRP must reassess their years of isolation, leaning on the method of Engels in his 1881 'Labour Standard' articles and on that of Lenin and Trotsky on the Labour Party at different times to do this. The Labour Party cannot be reformed or transformed into a revolutionary party as **Militant** believe. But neither will it be atomised under simply objective pressures, automatically clearing the way for Trotskyism.

A rather different problem arises when **Socialist Action** attributes political characteristics to left reformism which it cannot possess. The lefts must be tested, over and over, by placing demands on them. They must be criticized continually from the standpoint of Marxism. But 'Socialist Action' has evolved a peculiar stages theory of British politics: with Kinnock against Thatcher, then with Benn-Scargill against Kinnock (but not too soon...), then...we'll see. This has nothing in common with Trotsky's injunction to "share the struggle and not the illusions". The masses do not undergo an evolutionary transition from left reformism to revolutionary politics separated from the course of class struggle. In the aftermath of the miners' strike those who backed Scargill during the strike are quite capable of stepping back to what appears support for Kinnock, the man who condemned their strike under the massive material pressures of debts, impending redundancy and the cleavage in the union. This change in consciousness must be tracked to its root cause by Marxists and that is the change in the balance of forces within the coal industry. Instead John Ross has turned Marxism on its head and attributed this change of consciousness among miners to a general 'backwardness' of workers which must be overcome through ideological means. Hegel would appreciate his logic.

Thirdly, the conservative legacy of the labour aristocratic outlook examined by Trotsky in 'Where Is Britain Going?' and still embodied in the Labour and trade union leaderships now collides with the de-industrialization of Britain to produce large layers alienated from traditional politics. The attitude of various revolutionary groups to the recent riots reveals many contradictions yet to be explored.

Fourthly, the continuous pressure of bourgeois empiricism within the Labour Party and unions exerts itself on organisations in daily contact with the mass movement and it has to be answered through the fight for the tactics and slogans which flow from the method of the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

In the case of the WRP, which was barely present in the mass movement for two decades, an

adaptation to a significant layer of the petty bourgeoisie allowed a very particular type of idealism, masquerading as Marxism, to substitute for the living struggle to build a political perspective able to provide the bridge from today's struggles and consciousness, to the battle for an end to capitalism.

The current splits have occurred in the aftermath of the epic miners' strike and this is no co-incidence. Since 1968 great events in the class struggle in Britain, most notably in 1974, have always tested the political method of those claiming to be Trotskyists. In many respects the crisis within the WRP is greatly overdue. It illustrates how political bankruptcy can be covered up by regime techniques - for a time. Then the price has to be paid. Lenin's democratic centralism is not a dogma. It has to be founded in the given conditions of a country and at the international level it is especially difficult to apply. But it is the best vehicle in organisational-political terms which Marxists have yet developed to carry out the fight for socialism. Democratic centralism must not be confused in any way with regimes of the Healy type. In fact Healy's dumping of the political content of democratic centralism long ago prevented the later SLL and then the WRP from formulating slogans and tactics which could be of real value to working people. This cut the WRP off from the life of the class it claimed to represent.

DEGENERATION OF SLL

The SLG regards the SLL, from 1958 to 1971, as the mainstream of Trotskyism in Britain without obscuring the many political problems of those years. Revolutionary organizations cannot proceed without problems, but the break from internationalism and a turn to idealist propagandism destroyed the SLL as an organisation by 1974. Its best traditions must be assimilated, along with the lessons of its mistakes, by a Trotskyist cadre in Britain.

The degeneration of the SLL following an earlier turn away from the Labour Party allowed other currents to assume the name of Trotskyism in the eyes of many thousands of workers. These problems live on for those trying to constitute a British section of the Fourth International on a principled basis. The future party in Britain will contain militants from a number of the groupings currently in existence.

In this respect, clearing the roadblock of left reformism out of the way of the working class cannot be achieved at this stage from outside the framework of the Labour Party. Indeed, if the ultraleft politics of Gerry Healy have proven anything it is that sectarian abstention from the life of the mass movement does

not 'innoculate' an organisation from illusions in left reformists - as the strange and problematic cover-up of Ken Livingstone's rightward turn revealed. On the contrary, an unresolved sectarian-opportunist oscillation has always been present in the super-propagandist WRP. This contradiction can only be overcome by a re-examination of the central role which entry work continues to play in building a Marxist organisation in Britain.



From propagandism...
...to opportunism



Many of the issues which the forerunner of the SLG, the Bulletin Group, tried to raise with comrades of the SLL-WRP in 1974 have now resurfaced. The Bulletin Group became a clearing-house where those who were battling to defend the principled basis of Trotskyism fought it out, within their means, not only with the WRP leadership but then with Blick, Jenkins and others who were attacking Healy in order to quit Trotskyist politics. Despite the

inability of the Bulletin Group to carry the WSL of Thorneitt with it, internationalism or its failure to win the old cadre of the SLL, the political questions it raised in that period were real and are now being faced by militants in the WRP trying to find a road back to Trotskyism.

In similar fashion, the fact that in 1979 and 1980 only a handful of members of the IMG broke with Barnes and Mandel over the issue of whether Trotskyists had the right to organise within Nicaragua after the FSLN had conquered power must not obscure the questions of principle which were implicit in that discussion.

LIQUIDATION

It is not an easy thing to politically challenge an organisation one has spent years building. The Parity Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International was formed through a split in the USec and a fusion with the OCRFI, which came from the old ICFI. It was formed in defence of the method of Permanent Revolution and against a potential liquidation of Trotskyist cadres in petty bourgeois nationalism. Neither the Parity Committee, nor the Fourth International (International Centre for Reconstruction) which was formed after Nahuel Moreno split the Parity Committee on an unprincipled basis, have claimed to be the reconstructed Fourth International.

The SLG continues to stand for the regroupment of all those adhering to the decisions of the First Four Congresses of the Communist International, the struggle of Trotskyism and the Left Opposition from 1925 until 1938, and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Open and fraternal discussion between those claiming adherence to Trotskyism is a prerequisite to building a singular and principled Marxist Fourth International. A discussion which does not fudge over historical and political differences and which does not substitute sectarian phrasemongering for constructive polemic.

The miners' strike was the greatest event in the post-war history of the class struggle in Britain. It opened a pre-revolutionary period in which the working class is trying, through its traditional organisations, to construct movements capable of defending itself against the onslaught of imperialism in its death agonies. It is this great process which underpins the next political events and turning points. Under this impetus many alignments and new regroupments of organisations and currents taken for granted will occur. The SLG is confident that only the traditions and politics of Lenin and Trotsky can answer the needs of the working class.

BY GEORGE WHITE

National Trotskyism

Healy's Dead-end

"The real politics of the minority, the politics of Healy and the politics of his party in practice for several years are those of Pabloite revisionism: liquidation of the revolutionary party and the Fourth International into the national bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes whether through subordination to the Stalinist bureaucracy or to the national bourgeoisie in the ex-colonial countries." Cliff Slaughter, November 20th Newline.

The barbarism of the Healy regime has become clear to anyone with eyes. But more than the internal regime which destroyed many good people, the degree of corruption is shown in the obscene involvement in the murder of 21 members of the Iraqi Communist Party by the bourgeois regime of that country. Slaughter tells us that the Central Committee endorsed their execution and covered this up in the Newline as the execution of "conspirators". Behind this, Slaughter says, was "an unprincipled financial and political dependence on the Iraqi bourgeoisie". Yet the fact is that this action (Slaughter asserts that photographs of some of these people were handed over to the Iraqi embassy) was covered up for six years by the WRP leaders.

Whilst many are passing ribald comment on the crisis of the WRP and the spectacular way it has exploded, the Socialist Labour Group, which wants all the facts to emerge, is concerned that discussion be engaged on the political origins of the corruption of a Trotskyist organisation in which we trace our own roots without shame.

1953 SPLIT

Our roots go further, to a battle in the 1971 to 1974 period against the degeneration of the Socialist Labour League, which became the WRP.

The old SLL was for a time the most important Trotskyist organisation in Europe, with considerable roots in the working class. Its degeneration is part of the post-war crisis of the Fourth International, which split the Trotskyist movement from 1953. The political content of not going to the end in the fight against Michel Pablo and his liquidationist perspectives led James P. Cannon and the American SWP, the most important organisation

in the International Committee, formed to fight Pabloism, to take his party back to the Pabloite international in 1963. This was correctly opposed by the SLL and even though the latter-day Pabloites of the Socialist League are advising WRP members to trace the degeneration of the SLL from the refusal to join the Unified Secretariat in 1963, there is no answer to the problem of building the Fourth International to be found in the kind of unprincipled liaison which Barnes and others engage in today.

At an international meeting in 1971, in a discussion on the Polish events, in which workers like Edmund Baluka were taking on the repressive Stalinist regime of Gomulka-Gierek, Healy made the following statement, "We are in a political situation characterised by the fact that in the political development in England, what we are putting forward is power. We are the ones who are leading the struggle against the Tory government. The International is on the threshold of a leap forward as it is in England. That which is being prepared is the discrediting of Stalinism, reformism and centrism. Comrade Lambert cited in his intervention the new developments of the political situation in Poland (the Baltic strikes). There is a distinction to be made. It is in England that the leap forward will be made. It is in England that this leap forward will happen. We must take a stand on where this leap forward will happen, it is in England that the situation is explosive."

This was an abandonment of the fight for the Fourth International in favour of the crassest national messianism. This nationalist version of sect madness was to find its strongest echo among the petty bourgeois intelligentsia and semi-intelligentsia of the next phase - the turn to declaring the WRP. It inevitably had to conflict with the working class base of the WRP which had to daily carry wrong politics into their places of work and live with the consequences.

At the root of the tensions within the International Committee of the Fourth International had been the question of reconstructing the International. The 1966 World Conference resolution, which the SLL voted, was entitled, "Rebuilding the Fourth International". The SLL practically pulled out of this work and tried to write out of history the destructive effects of the Pabloite

crisis, which remained a major obstacle. In 1967 the OCI, the French section of the ICFI, wrote, "To say that we have assumed and that we do assume responsibility for the continuity of the Fourth International...does not enable us to suppose that this development is not precarious. These processes develop through contradictions. Having declared the bankruptcy of the Pabloite leadership we cannot simply state that the Fourth International continues purely and simply, with the ICFI taking the place of the Pabloite ISFI. It was no little event, no little accident that all the old leadership of the FI capitulated under the pressure of imperialism and Stalinism, without any reaction from the majority of the sections. It is no mere nothing that the SWP, having temporarily broken from the ISFI, fused with it in 1963, breaking up the ICFI, and is now the leading wing of revisionism. In fact, the Pabloite crisis dislocated the FI organisationally, accumulated theoretical and political problems to be resolved, developed political confusion inside organisations which could have evolved differently and prevented organisations of the FI being built...despite the joint crisis of imperialism and the bureaucracy giving rise to conditions never before present.

We cannot shout, 'The king is dead, long live the king!' We must open a discussion on these questions, which has not yet been undertaken by the IC. For us it is indeed a question of rebuilding the FI by bringing the fundamental reasons for the Pabloite crisis into the light of the day and drawing the lessons from it."

PABLOISM

The SLL did see the ICFI as simply taking the place of the single ISFI leadership. Instead of conducting an ongoing search for the social and political roots of Pabloism it came in the end to the conclusion that Pablo had renounced "dialectical materialism". This is not the place to be clever after the event. Political movements are forced to work within their theoretical and material limits, which are historically determined. It is more to do with the longer term problems of the Trotskyist movement in Britain than with the will or character of individuals.

The 1971 split with the OCI, POR, LRSH and the LOM, was necessary in

order for Healy to consummate his marriage with destiny as national guru and international messiah. The comrades of the WRP should examine very closely and with great caution the method of 'declaring' the party which was followed. The WRP was needed as the material proof of the Healy perspective. Is it not also the material expression of the method of 'never-ending revolutionary situation'?

A revolutionary party, a Trotskyist party, is a vital necessity in Britain, but it can only be brought about as part of the life of a real international movement and through a correct strategic orientation to the mass movement, which we do not believe the SLL-WRP has had for a very long time.

Perhaps the essence of the WRP method was to be found in a visit to Swindon during the 1974 General Election when the branch there was told to use the election campaign to recruit 200 members...in one day!

Along with all the long stored up problems flowing out of the history of the Fourth International - the subjective factor, it is vital to study how the objective pressure of the needs of the working class, through the miners' strike, led to intolerable conditions within the WRP.

The WRP's policy during the strike was classically ultra-left. From the conception of an existing revolutionary situation they conducted a 'struggle for power'. The slogan for a General Strike was raised in the most debased way - linked to MayDay for instance. Next on the agenda was a workers' revolutionary government - perhaps with Vanessa Redgrave as Britain's answer to Melina Mercouri. Soviets, under the pseudonym of Community Councils, were to be built immediately. What a travesty and what a tragedy that Trotskyist cadre had to work day in and day out for this.

The General Strike call becomes empty rhetoric when made in an open ended way. It is a very specific slogan, which indeed was relevant

from July through to November, during the miners' strike. But the WRP continued to espouse it long after events demanded a different perspective and even after the strike had ended in defeat. One of the hallmarks of a sect is that it loses all sense of tactics.

GENERAL STRIKE

The actual content of the General Strike call during the strike was based on the willingness of whole sections of the working class to join in industrial action with the miners and it had the cutting edge of being aimed against left union leaders like Buckton, Knapp, Todd and McNestry of Nacods, who gave verbal support to the miners but refused to initiate the broad action which alone could have led to a victory against Thatcher.

In that situation the strategic line of revolutionary policy was the classic 'Break with the bourgeoisie', expressed through various concrete tactical slogans. In the end the NUM leaders, as such, backed off from attacking the treachery of Willis and Kinnock, one of the weaknesses of the Scargill methods during the strike. Scargill accepted as good coin the promise by the TUC leaders to back the miners, in place of building a campaign in the unions and Labour Party to rouse the ranks against leaders dragging their feet and against actual sabotage of the strike.

Of course, a revolutionary policy could not stop on the level of demands made to left leaders. On the ground the fight to transform support groups into wider workplace based action committees was the actual road down which the fight for pre-sovietic forms should have gone. Even here, the lessons of Russia in 1905 and 1917 are that these organisms are not so much declared as brought about by the working class itself. We are part of a creative class, which while not able to spontaneously construct a

revolutionary party, is very able to bring into existence organs of class struggle which lead into the need for the revolutionary party. This problem - the fact that the subjective factor in history is not totally reducible to the internal life of the Trotskyist party was at the root of Healy's cavalier attitude to the 1971 Polish events. No SLL? No future!

In fact the Stalinists tried all through the miners' strike to turn the support groups into money raising and moral support bodies - a sort of Live Aid for the miners - and to stifle the political discussion which was the life blood of developing the dispute. The ultraleft line of the WRP left it largely on the sidelines of this battle against Stalinism.

The miners were defeated and today are suffering the consequences. The closure programme proceeds and harassment of NUM activists is rife.



Gerry Healy says that fascism is on the agenda. It is only a short step to saying that since the working class, especially the miners, did not see the light so far as WRP politics were concerned, then they deserve the punishment of fascism. First fascism then Healy?

The SLG does not believe the defeat was a historic defeat, in the sense that it opens a period of unbridled reaction. We reject totally the Mandel-Ross-Tony Cliff line that the working class is moving to the right in some 'ideological' way and will not rise to its historic tasks in the forthcoming period.

Of course the Stalinists say that the strike was defeated because it turned to old, outdated, methods of class struggle no longer of any use. They make 'Scargillism' the butt of their attacks, as does their theoretical pupil Kinnock. Scargill must be defended against these latter-day Kautskys, because in the name of Scargill it is the working class which is being attacked. But the defence of Scargill requires a thorough critique of the limitations of his politics.

The policy of the WRP became simple denunciation in its press of Willis and Kinnock - the holding up of a propaganda mirror to the mood of striking miners - propagandist tailism.



Soviets must have a material base

This convinced nobody who wasn't already convinced. It failed to answer the problems being faced by the most principled elements in the unions and Labour Party who were involved up to the hilt in the strike and well aware of the treachery of Kinnock and Willis. How to **organise** against Willis and bring other workers out, this was the question which needed answering. The placing of 'Community Councils' on the agenda took WRP militants off into the wilderness when these battles

were being fought out in the mass movement.

What about the pulling together of an organised left in the Labour Party prepared and capable of challenging Kinnock in public? This ran up against the combined obstacles of **Militant** and Stalinism. What could the WRP do about that? What about the problem of building Broad Lefts in the unions? Can this be reduced to the ATUA, the 'Trade Union Department of the

WRP', which has brought the age of Stalinist ultrasect Red Unions back into play in the most farcical way? What can the WRP do to combat the **Militant** 24-Hour General Strike perspective when they themselves were forwarding a more extreme example of the same propaganda fetishism?

BY SAM STACEY
25 November 1985



The spectre of Bonapartism was haunting the SLL in the early 1970s

"Surely until the bourgeoisie makes a real break with parliamentary rule, aided by a fascist movement of some kind and including the suspension of parliament by some means or another, it is exaggerated to simply declare the regime 'Bonapartist' without qualification. Every move towards Bonapartism is challenged by the working class: surely this obstacle cannot be overcome without the enraged petty bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat (long-term unemployed etc) supporting a Bonaparte against the working class." Simon Pirani.

In the same article as the above quote comrade Pirani says that he fears that the designation of the Thatcher regime as Bonapartist was

used to "hype up the vision of the immediacy of the revolution and abandon serious analysis." This is an important admission for it opens the way to a scientific analysis of

class relations in this period instead of the metaphysical categories of Healy, for whom a revolutionary period is one in which he **wishes** there to be a revolution.

This is false. The Tory Party is a classically bourgeois parliamentary institution and could not transform itself into either a fascist party or the political expression of a Pinochet-type military government. It has not made any "real break" with parliamentary institutions and could not do so without paying the price of a massive and public cleavage in its own ranks. When Thatcher came to power in 1979 she did so with a plan of campaign which was aimed at overcoming the consequences of the defeat of Heath. She certainly wanted to drastically change the balance of class forces in favour of the ruling class and this required the breaking of the power of the unions. The collapse of British imperialism is driving the ruling class, or to be more correct, sections of it, to consider all sorts of political attacks on the working class. It would not be true to say otherwise. But the material break with the long tradition of parliamentarism and the institutions of the British state as organically formed up to now will be part of the dialectical course of the class struggle itself and not the product of a conspiracy by any small group of army tops or Tory rightists. It is Margaret Thatcher and not Harvey Proctor who leads the Tory Party. There is more than an academic difference.

Thatcher has been able to beat sections of workers and use these defeats to inflict setbacks on the class as a whole because of one main factor - the politics of the bureaucracy of the Labour Party and trade unions. This is a feature within the political and social framework of parliamentarism and not a feature of the replacement of parliament with Bonapartism. Which is not to say that certain aspects of Thatcher's centralised government are not linked to moves in a Bonapartist direction. But, for instance, a Bonapartist government would not mess around with Labour councils over funding in the way the Tories have done. In would go the 'commissioners' and that would be that.

PEOPLES MARCH

The Tories carefully prepared for the miners' strike, while the working class had been systematically disarmed by the Labour leaders, who closed down the Peoples' March movements and tried to keep things strictly within electoralist limits, and by the TUC leaders, who stifled strike after strike and isolated every struggle.

In was in this context that the ruling class modified its institutions - within the parliamentary framework - and brought into play the courts, changes in policing, secrecy not only from the House of Commons but also from the ranks of the Tory Parliamentary Party. But the line has been drawn at seeking to tie unions to the law and not in outlawing them. So wherein was the 'dictatorship'? In

fact the government continues to be very careful in this respect, trying not to provoke a conflict which would force the TUC as such to wage a national battle on the governmental level.

To call the Thatcher government a fully-finished Bonapartist regime is to politically disarm the vanguard of the working class who may one day have to deal with just such a development in the real world.

The roots of this problem go back beyond the immediate military coup predictions in 1974. They have a prehistory in the ultraleft concept that the working class would never again turn to the Labour Party after the 1964 General Election.

In his article on the United Front question, which was published in the *Newsline*, comrade MB stated that the ruling class has decided to go for "fascist military terror à la Pinochet."



One of the conditions for the emergence of Bonapartism in Britain will be a break by large sections of the petty bourgeoisie from a parliamentary outlook. In fact the moves toward the Alliance show that for the moment this is not the case. Many professional people are opposing the removal of the GLC and other metropolitan authorities, which is part of the centralisation of the state. The WRP must think again about the importance of the BBC strike against vetting, the Ponting affair and the Sarah Tisdall case.

In the long term though the petty bourgeoisie is not an independent political force and it is the two main classes, proletariat and bourgeoisie which are decisive. Hence the modification of class relations implied in Bonapartism must come about by subordinating the workers' movement to the bourgeois state. Is the WRP saying now that this has been achieved? Are we seeing another throwback to the 'corporatism' which Healy espoused in the 1970s, when the union leaders were supposed to have become part of the bourgeois state as such? Is the TUC now a Bonapartist institution, or does it support the framework of Bonapartism?

The bourgeoisie in Britain will break decisively with parliamentary

methods only as a last resort. would herald the end of its main party for the best part of a century the Tory Party.

BONAPARTISM

To imagine that the ruling class has gone straight from parliamentary rule to "fascist-military terror à la Pinochet" is to miss out altogether the continuing resilience and strength of the working class on which the characterisation of this as pre-revolutionary period is based. Within such a period major oscillations are inevitable as the classes each take the initiative seeking a lasting solution to historical problems. But at least there would be signs of an emerging mass fascist movement. Is this the case? We think not. That is why Pirani is correct to say that the opposition of the working class cannot be overcome "without the enraged petty bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat...supporting Bonaparte against the working class." Although we feel that he has confused a little the difference between a fascist regime based upon a mass base and the liquidation of the working movement and Bonapartist regime, it is able for a time to hold the working class in check, of which there are many examples, from de Gaulle in imperialist France to Juan Peron in semi-colonial Argentina. Even the semi-Bonapartism of DeValera in 1930s Ireland might be instructive. They are all very different from the fascism of Hitler or the military dictatorship of Pinochet.

In any case the problem is to avoid looking around for concrete examples to fit into a schema, even if the schema is based on quotations taken from Marx or Trotsky. Historical analogy has its limitations.

We are living in Britain in a complex pre-revolutionary situation under the shadow of looming class battles. Between now and then lies the historic blockage of the counter-revolutionary apparatus of reformism, with its Stalinist advisors and allies. Both classes have to realign their forces in the face of the ineluctable decline of British imperialism, the most profound in the history of capitalism.

The interaction between the consciousness of the proletariat which clings to its past - the Labour Party and electoralism - in the face of problems which cannot be solved using these means, and the objective crisis of capitalism, is at the heart of the tactical problems facing Trotskyists. But before these tactical matters, which allow the implantation and building of a real workers' revolutionary party, can be dealt with, the problem of the nature of the period has to be opened up for the most thorough consideration.

BY SAM STACEY AND
GEORGE WHITE

From SLL to WRP - A process of degeneration

According to a statement which appeared in the 'Newline' of 12th November 1985 put out by the WRP Central Committee:

"A bureaucratic, centrist and profoundly nationalist degeneration has taken place within the WRP over the last several years, expressing the pressure of imperialism on the Trotskyist movement."

Whilst the SLG believes that this characterisation is in itself insufficient to describe the scope of the political degeneration of that organisation, it is evident from the debates and discussion emerging in the columns of the 'Newline' that it serves as a starting point for militants who are seeking to find the political means to re-orient themselves on the basis of the programme of Trotskyism and the Fourth International.

What is certain is that no-one making such a characterisation can accept that the political problems to be resolved are those of the normal kind - errors to be examined, tactical corrections to be made - which confront every revolutionary organisation in its daily practice.

For every honest militant in the WRP who wants to build a real Trotskyist Party and the Fourth International, this admission poses a fundamental obligation. The roots of this degeneracy must be probed to the bottom. This cannot but involve a complete re-examination of the theoretical and practical development of the WRP, considered in relation to the development of the class struggle and the WRP's place in that development.

INTERNAL REGIME

Neither blaming Healy as a "bad man", nor a discussion of what must constitute a correct internal Party regime can suffice as substitutes for this task. For the expression of alien class forces - the "pressure of imperialism" - directly in the central leadership and in the political line and method of a supposedly revolutionary organisation, over a long period, is not a "normal" affair.

The WRP's crisis has broken open firstly on the questions of communist morality and the Party regime. These matters are the expression of political and programmatic problems. "The pressure of imperialism" is not some ethereal or intangible substance. It is a material and objective force which weighs upon the workers' movement daily and becomes more forceful as the crisis of imperialism deepens. The more rotten and corrupt the imperialist system becomes, the greater its need to corrupt the leaders and organisations which claim to represent the interests of the working class.

This material force is exerted in militants and organisations in the course of their activity in the class struggle. To examine and understand this pressure and combat it, it is necessary to examine the practical and theoretical activity of the revolutionary movement at every step, to check the lessons of each struggle against the lessons of the past struggles of the class, but to do this on the basis of Marxist principles and the Transitional Programme.

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME

The hundreds of militants who have joined the WRP because they want to build a revolutionary party must adopt this course if they are to find a way out of their present crisis. The SLG has the aim of building such a world party - the Fourth International. That is why we are not indifferent to the efforts being made by many WRP militants to find a road back to the working class and back to the Transitional Programme. We believe that an honest political examination of this kind, without recourse to self-justifications, will lead these militants to look further back than "several years" in tracing the degeneration of the WRP and its leadership.

But to chart a course in politics it is necessary to have a political map and compass and to know how to use them.

One of the political features of the SLL/WRP leadership in the course

of its political degeneration has been to throw away these essentials. They started this by erecting the falsehood that the "development of theory" or the "ideological struggle" proceeds separately from and takes precedence over the battle for the programme of the Fourth International. This programme, not a set of recipes, nor an ideological statement of faith, is an instrument to "change the world" and not merely to "interpret" it - as Marx said was essential.

Its aim is definite: to resolve the crisis of working class leadership by helping the masses go from today's conditions and today's consciousness to the seizure of power. The struggle for it is intimately bound up with the experiences and action of the working class itself. As Trotsky said, this programme concentrates all the progressive experiences of the proletariat in its struggle in this epoch.

Against both Pabloite and Healyite revisionism, the SLG asserts that this programme and its method are the central tools of revolutionaries today, as in 1938 when the Fourth International was founded.

It is this programme to which honest WRP militants must return and use as their yardstick in their attempt to measure the political scope of the crisis which has engulfed their organisation. It must also be taken as their starting-point and political anchor in estimating what must be done.

For the "unity in theory and practice" that constitutes Marxism, the science of revolution, is concentrated in the battle for that programme and the construction of the International (whose programme it is) in the working class.

CORRUPT PRACTICES

The pressure of alien class forces, manifested in the degeneration of the WRP leaders, in a corrupt and despicable set of political practices and in bizarre and twisted political orientations, we repeat, is a material force which weighs down upon the whole workers' movement. It cannot

be understood and defeated simply by ideological dissection of the "philosophy" of Healy. Rather, the penetration of this pressure into the workers' movement arises in the course of the living process of class struggle. It is the method employed by the WRP in the class struggle which must be examined, not the cerebral processes of Healy.

CRISIS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Since 1845, when Marx placed himself theoretically on the ground of the materialist conception of history, the method of Marxism has been concentrated in the struggle to change the world. That is why we insist that the struggle for method is founded upon the battle for the Transitional Programme which remains the fundamental programme of the world proletarian revolution, since it is aimed at resolving the central question - "the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of proletarian leadership". The principles of the Transitional Programme - which centre on the unified character of the world socialist revolution, the revolutionary role of and the political independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie and its agencies - are the basis upon which Marxist method is founded.

The SLG believes that the degeneration undergone by the WRP has its roots in the crisis of the Fourth International, which has continued since the development of a hardened revisionist current in the leadership of the Fourth International around Pablo in the early 1950s. Since then, revisionism has been responsible for confusion in and dispersion of the forces of Trotskyism. From 1953, with the foundation of the International Committee, which set itself the task of defeating revisionism and re-building the Fourth International, there has been a continuous fight to defend the political continuity of the Fourth International. This has centred on the defence of the Transitional Programme through the struggle to implement it in the movement of the masses against imperialism and Stalinism.



Karl Marx

Our own 'international current, the Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction) continues this tradition and battle today, without claiming to have resolved the crisis.

REVISIONISM

Militants in the WRP must seek to find the reasons why their leadership has in recent years entered into the pay of reactionary national-bourgeois regimes in Libya and Iraq, surpassing the opportunist capitulations of the Pabloites. How is it possible to any longer hold to the position that revisionism has been defeated and that the WRP and its rump 'International Committee' constitute the Fourth International today? This capitulation stands in opposition to the whole thrust of the SLL and its predecessor "the Club", from 1953 when it fought Pablo,

through to the late 1960s. At time, the SLL fought shoulder-to-shoulder with our international current in the International Committee.

But by 1971, the SLL had already undergone a degeneration of "national Trotskyist" type, explained by comrade Stacey. But we can say more. The seeds of "Healy" regime were already taking root. At the same time, the practice of the SLL in the British class struggle, as in the International, oriented away from the mass organisations of the class and becoming increasingly sectarian and ultimativistic. Under the cover of the supposed "Marxist philosophy", the SLL retreated from the Transitional Programme and adopted an apparatus-building conception of struggle for the Party, in place of the method of that programme, which was the same as that of Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto.

Since 1848, the method of Marxism has been founded on the premise that the Communists do not oppose themselves to the movement of the working class as a whole. The movement of the present, they represent the movement of the future. Trotsky was unequivocal on this score. He asserted: "... that the struggle of the Party to win the majority of the class must in every instance come into opposition with the requirements of the workers' unity within their fighting ranks. "What Next?"

Yet this is what, increasingly, the SLL retreated from, after 1964 when it ceased to intervene in



Redgrave, Torrance and Mitchell: see no evil, hear no evil...

Labour Party.

From 1964 to the foundation of the WRP, its policy was marked by a misestimation of the relationship between the movement of the working class and its traditional organisations, particularly the Labour Party.

The central theme developed was that the Labour leaders were being "exposed", leading "objectively" to a break by the working class with the reformists. It remained only to proclaim the "alternative" revolutionary leadership in the finished form of the SLL. The end of this road was the "transformation" of the SLL into the WRP by proclamation in 1973.

COMINTERN

But historical experience, particularly the experience of the Bolshevik Party and that of the early Communist International, gives the lie to such methods. The construction of revolutionary parties with a mass influence is not achieved by proclamations.

It was falsely reduced by the SLL leaders to a perspective of linear growth of the existing framework of the SLL, its technical apparatus and paper. The "leap" envisaged with the formation of the WRP was justified by them in terms of an automatic correspondence between the Party and the "leap" supposedly made by the working class in rejecting the Labour Party's "corporatism".

Through the late 1960s, the SLL engaged in campaigns against the anti-working class measures of the Wilson government - like its "Prices and Incomes" policies and "In Place of Strife" white paper. It fought Wilson's complicity with the war in Vietnam. The slogan it developed - "Make the Left MPs fight Wilson" at least formally took into account the problem of raising, before the working class, the question of fighting for a break by Labour with the ruling class.

But this slogan, powerful when addressed to a component of the Labour Party and to the aspirations of militants to challenge the reformist leaders, lost its force by being posed purely from outside the Labour Party. It did not enable the Trotskyists to connect with militants in the Labour Party, or trade unionists who regarded it as "their" party, and engage in a common fight.

COMMON WORK

Thus the SLL went to successive Labour Party Conferences to demonstrate outside. This represented a break with its methods in the 1950s when the presence of Trotskyists in Labour Party Conferences (for example, in the "Unilateralism" struggle against Gaitskell and in relation to the Bevanite movement)

was a crucial factor. Most importantly, this was related to a battle to organise a genuine left-wing, alongside militants who were not yet prepared to accept the Trotskyists' programme and seek to convince them on the basis of common work and experiences.

Underneath the cover of an increasingly propagandist condemnation of reformist betrayals, the SLL abandoned the fight in the Labour Party. In this, it committed a crime. For that space has in some measure been filled by the centrism of "Militant", who are today able to act as an obstacle to thousands of workers and youth.

A decision to withdraw the forces won in the Young Socialists by 1964 in order to preserve those forces against witch-hunting and dissipation is one thing. But what happened after 1964 was that all the SLL's forces were oriented in the direction of the "open party" and daily newspaper.

Not only did the SLL start to look with disdain on the internal struggles and conflicts in the Labour Party but, in failing to train its cadres and to send at least some of them back into the Labour Party, many of the gains were frittered away. What happened to the thousands of young people won to Trotskyism in the early 1960s? They were cut off from the mass organisations of the working class and given a perspective of frantic, activist work selling papers and building for rallies and meetings. This was not the Bolshevik method of systematic and patient fraction building in the mass organisations. This was in effect liquidation and ruination of the hard-won gains of our movement.

"No section of the working class" would "ever again" look to the Labour Party for leadership. WRP militants

who today are questioning the way in which the WRP pretends to counterpose itself as an alternative, ready-made, to the Labour Party should ponder this statement. It comes not from Healy in 1985. It comes from the Perspectives of the SLL twenty years ago!

Those who are raising the need for a re-evaluation of tactics in connection with the United Front and the need to "correct sectarian errors", will have to go back to this experience. When the SLL was founded in 1959, it continued the work of the British section which had a fine record of struggle in the 1950s, including intervention on the docks, in the crisis of Stalinism, but especially in the battles inside the Labour Party.

In its founding documents and in the early issues of the "Newsletter", the SLL always insisted that it did not counterpose the construction of a revolutionary organisation in Britain to the struggle in the Labour Party. Indeed one of the very first battles fought by the SLL leadership was against the tendency led by Brian Behan which argued for an "open" organisation.

It wrote at the time, correctly:

"... there is not, and there could not be, any mass swing away from the Labour Party, because:-

- i) workers do not lightly turn away from the organisations they have built up by their own sacrifice, and
- ii) there can exist no mass alternative until the Labour Party itself is in a process of disintegration."

"Consequently, the discontent of the workers seeks expression within the Labour Party itself. Objectively and subjectively the present situation cries out for the intervention of the Fourth International within the mass political organisations of the British working class."



Return to the traditions of the International Committee!

What changed between 1960 and 1964 in terms of the overall relationship between the Labour Party and the working class? A serious answer to this must conclude that the impatience of the SLL leadership and the search for short-cuts led to a sectarian turn away from the battle previously conducted for a decade and a half. This turn was justified by the SLL leaders with reference to the maturing of revolutionary conditions and the imminence of "objective" crisis which would thrust the SLL into a position to challenge for leadership of the working class.

MASS PARTIES

Revolutionary parties, which are genuinely rooted in important sections of the working class vanguard, can only be built through the experience of these advanced elements. Whilst building a Party is a conscious political process which turns on the battle for the Programme of Trotskyism, the Party is an expression of the overall movement of the working class towards the conquest of power.

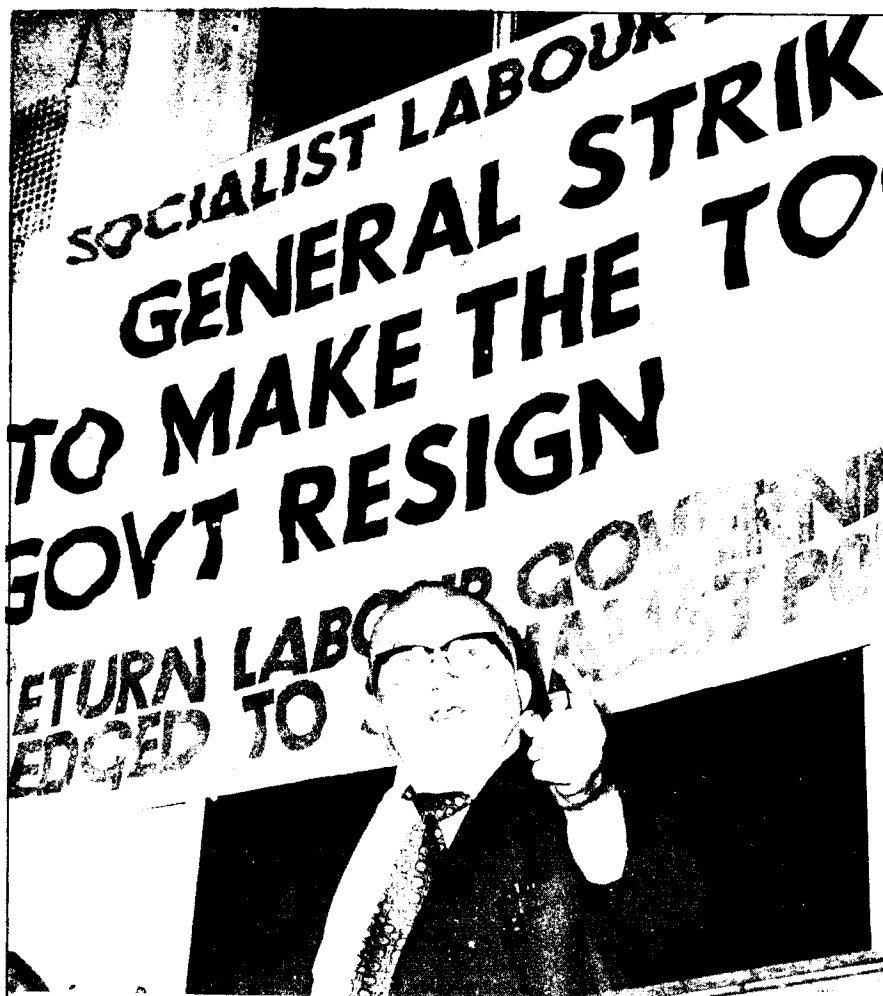
This battle is taken up in the complex conditions created by the extended crisis of working class leadership spanning decades. The working class remains principally organised in and in relation to mass parties led by counter-revolutionary reformists and Stalinists.

"The laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatuses" asserts the Transitional Programme. And the movement of the working class brings it into conflict with these apparatuses. But the creation of new political parties cannot but pass through all kinds of internal crises within these old organisations, which the masses must test to the end. This may well involve ruptures, breaks and all sorts of formations intermediate between the old forms and the Programme of the Fourth International. Since there is no "natural Marxism" emerging spontaneously, the future of those currents which emerge, expressing in a contradictory and uneven way the conflict between the class and the apparatuses depends on the intervention of Marxists armed with the Transitional Programme in their battles.

This was why Lenin fought for a correct appreciation of the need to intervene in the Labour Party. Not to reform the reformists but to enable revolutionaries to connect the vanguard of the class with the mass, to test out and compare in front of the workers, the programme of revolution against that of reformist betrayal.

Thus in Britain, all the traditions of the Marxist movement since 1920 imply that the road to building a revolutionary party passes through the experience of the masses in and around the Labour Party.

This was one of the elements of



When Healy called for the return of a Labour government.

THE WRECKAGE OF

emerging differences that led to the split of the International Committee in 1971.

Today, the United Front question is being raised by members of the WRP as a political problem. In 1971, this was a central political issue in the split in the International Committee. The SLL tried then to pretend that the OCI was capitulating to the apparatuses when it raised the need to present a political perspective which counterposed the working class, as a class, against the bourgeoisie.

Who has capitulated to the apparatuses, and even directly to the enemy classes? That same leadership which has broken with its own previous tradition and broken with the interests of the working class in a fundamental way.

Space prevents us here analysing the work of the SLL and WRP in the trade unions. But the formation of the All Trade Union Alliance and its development as the "Industrial Department of the WRP" has nothing in common with the tactics and methods outlined in the experience of the revolutionary Comintern, nor the work of the Communist Party in the Minority Movement.

At a time when the working class urgently needs real mass 'broad lefts' and not bureaucratic fictions which serve the interests of careerists, WRP

militants would do well to consider the tactical proposals presented in the trade union work in the Transitional Programme. They have everything in common with what the Trotskyists did in the docks in the mid-1930s: nothing to do with the reformist sectarianism that is today evident in the ATUA.

TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS

Again, in the 1960s, a militant, arising from the workers' stewards' movement, including Thornett, were won to Trotskyism. What has the false orientation of the WRP done to these militants? The answer is that many of them have been broken as militants. Not because they were weak or dishonest, but because they were offered no real battle in practice for leadership within the class.

Throughout the 1960s, the WRP maintained a particular government slogan. It called for "A Government Pledged to Socialist Policies". The SLG believes this formulation was not a correct proposal, in the form of a transitional demand, the struggle towards workers' government. We must demand unconditionally for a



OCI youth movement meeting of 10,000

TROTSKYIST HERITAGE

government being brought to power against the parties of the bourgeoisie, without giving one inch to the idea that Labour as a "bourgeois-worker" party (to use Lenin's description), can bring a socialist transformation of society.

Inadequate as the SLL's slogan was, it did have the merit of implying critical support to Labour against the parties of the ruling class on the basis of sharing the struggle of the workers, without sharing their illusions in a Labour government.

The Transitional Programme is explicit on the question of how to pose the perspective of a workers' government in conditions where the working class is led by reformists and Stalinists:-

"Of all the parties and organizations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should, in our opinion, form the programme of the workers' and farmers' government."

Involved here is again the method of the United Front as a lever to

build a revolutionary party in living connection with the experience of the masses.

But the road to the foundation of the WRP was littered with the wreckage of its Trotskyist heritage. From the election of the Labour government in 1974, we have a decisive break in the political method of the WRP leadership. For now they began to refer to Liberals, Conservatives and Labour as the "three main parties" and to stress only one side of the contradiction embodied in the existence of the Labour Party as a mass workers' party, organically adapted to British imperialism.

This led the WRP to theorise that the Labour and Trade Union leaders were paving the way for 'corporatism' or were actively preparing it. The WRP's propaganda could be likened to much of the material put out by Stalinism in the "Third Period", when it dealt with the role of reformism.

It was, however, not a recrudescence of third period Stalinism, but a specific degeneration from Trotskyism, a product of the crisis of the Fourth International.

In two stages, the WRP completed their break from the Transitional Programme. The first involved the demand for "A General Strike to bring down the Labour

government." This was advanced in response to the capitulation of the Wilson and Callaghan governments to the needs of British capitalism in crisis, expressed by its imposition of the "Social Contract", by cuts introduced as a capitulation before the IMF and by the "Lib-Lab Pact".

Initially, the WRP's demand was connected with the demand for an emergency conference of the Labour Party. What was this Conference to do? We were told that it should adopt the programme of the WRP! The inability of the WRP to seriously present itself as a political alternative to reformism is here starkly revealed.

SECTARIAN

This problem found its resolution. For, in conditions where Thatcher and the Tories have replaced Labour in government, the "Workers' Revolutionary Government", presumably formed by the WRP, became the form of its governmental slogan.

Divorced from any objective appraisal from the real political relations in the workers' movement and any real addressing of the tasks of leadership to be accomplished, this line was justified by the "revolutionary situation" which was sucked out of the thumbs of the WRP leaders.

At the same time, the wildest sectarian delusions have been accompanied by opportunist capitulation, not only to Ken Livingstone - the 'Newslite' described Lambeth labour council's massive rate rises and cuts programmes as the actions of "The Council That Cares" in banner headlines.

Space precludes here dealing with many aspects of this degeneration. In these few remarks, we are trying to impress one main point upon all those who seek to understand what has happened to the WRP.

That is that the crimes and delusions of a corrupted sect had their precursors in the profound mistakes of analysis and orientation of the SLL well into the 1960s, when it was a Trotskyist organisation and not a sect. Those mistakes involve problems of method whose roots lie in the unresolved problems of the Fourth International.

Militants of the WRP, you have been trained and schooled in false methods and fed on lies. The road back to Trotskyism, if you choose to take it, will be long and hard. Go back to the Transitional Programme. Go back to the founding declarations of the International Committee and of the SLL. Go back to the 1966 Conference documents of the ICFI. If you take these as your starting point, we have a common language and can develop a common aim.

BY MICHAEL KEENE

The Socialist League: Unprincipled politics lead to an explosion

One of the important factors leading to the recent split in the Socialist League, particularly in the aftermath of the miners' strike, was disagreement over the role of marxists in the Labour Party. After ten years of attempting to build a revolutionary party outside the Labour Party through tailing new 'vanguards', the IMG - the forerunner of the SL - decided that the latest 'vanguard' was the Bennite Current' in its push for democracy and accountability in the Labour Party.

The IMG, therefore, decided on a full scale reorientation towards the Labour Party in order to become part of this 'current', and joined the struggle within the Labour Party, late in the day, which reached its climax in the Benn challenge to Healey.

After Benn lost to Healey by a fraction of a percentage point, the RFMC, the 'umbrella' committee for the left in the Labour Party, was closed down as part of the build up to the so-called 'truce' agreed at Bishop Stortford between both wings of the apparatus in the party.

As the SLG pointed out at the time, this was a signal for the right-wing of the Labour Party to go on the offensive. This, together with the difficult situation after the miners' defeat, has forced the SL to seek fresh 'vanguards' and in the absence of an organised left wing, they have been moving sharply to the right.

This article examines the rightward shift of **Socialist Action** and the response of the **International** group that broke with them.

OPPORTUNISM

In 1970, the IMG were involved with a paper called **Red Mole**. This paper ran a debate on the Labour Party around an article by Robin Blackburn entitled 'Let it Bleed'. At that time **Red Mole** was not in the sole editorial control of the IMG and Blackburn was not then a member of the IMG. However the position of the IMG towards the Labour Party was highlighted when its Political Committee endorsed the Oxford branch of the IMG physically breaking up a meeting with a Labour MP around the time of the 1970 General Election. Even in the later 1970s the IMG were still seeking to build a revolutionary organisation through 'gaining hegemony' over the left outside of the Labour Party.

Nowadays **Socialist Action** considers attempts by **Labour Briefing** and others to organise the left within the Labour Party as an 'ultraleft' adventure. So much for the **Red Mole** cartoons of the early 1970s depicting moles, with red flags, tearing up 'vote Labour' placards.

To analyse how the IMG-SL moved from their own ultraleft stance towards the Labour Party to a liquidation of their forces into the very same party, it is necessary to examine their method towards the mass workers' movement.

This is the root of their oscillation from an opportunist adaptation to the student 'vanguard' of the 1970s to an opportunism in the Labour Party today. We do not criticize the SL for its orientation towards the Labour Party but for their capitulation before Kinnock.

VANGUARDS

The present arguments in **Socialist Action** cannot be explained by the pessimism of leaders like Ross. It is a continuing search for 'vanguards' to replace the working class which is at the heart of their opportunism. Pabloism substitutes the current moods of a certain layer within the left of the Labour apparatus for an objective consideration of the real needs of the whole working class.

After the 1968 General Strike in France, linked to the radicalisation of youth and students in the VietNam Solidarity Campaign here, the IMG sought its growth through an illusory 'student vanguard'. At various times the Pabloite leaders have chosen Latin American guerillas, students, Black people and feminism as their chief 'vanguard'. These are always seen as ideologically moving towards Marxist politics. Therefore, it follows that the battle for the Transitional Programme and the building of the Fourth International can be 'tactically' subordinated to the latest 'vanguard'.

This tailing of left developments, both in the mass movement and among the petty bourgeoisie, underpins the method of John Ross. Now he tails the centre-left apparatus which runs the Labour Party.

In 1978, before the IMG adopted its major orientation to the Labour Party they wrote, "The constituency parties are more subject to the pressures of routinism, electoralism,

resolution-mongering etc., and have a much lower weight than the trade unions in the class struggle. It is an assessment of this special character of the LP which must determine the weight given to the orientation of revolutionaries in the Labour Party and the tactics employed in carrying out that intervention.

...The precondition for the transformation of this small layer from a localised and fragmented opposition into the backbone of a national left wing is the movement of a section of the left leadership towards organising their base. But these forces led by Benn have shown that they are not prepared to act independently of the trade union bureaucracy - the chief props of the government policy. We can expect, therefore, no development of a resurgent left wing in the Labour Party on a national scale before the General Election".

This is how the IMG rationalised abandoning the left militants who were fighting in the Labour Party, while for the moment they chased a bloc of the ultra-left with the SWP and others. The IMG said that until Benn decided to organise his left wingers an intervention in the Labour Party carried 'little weight'. This means that it was for Benn to decide when they would go in and on what scale, does it not?

As the SLG said at the time, "This is known as tail-ending the bureaucracy".

ACCOUNTABILITY

The 1974-79 Labour Government was removed from office, as a result of the low-pay strikes against the social contract during the 'winter of discontent'. Layers of the working class did turn towards the Labour Party in the search for a political solution to counter the betrayals of the Labour and trade union leaders during the period of the Wilson-Callaghan Labour Government. This immediately raised the need for 'democratic accountability' within the Labour Party, if the rank and file were to have any control over their leaders. The growth of the CLPD and the creation of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, as an 'umbrella' left coordinating body was an important development for the left in the Labour Party. However, the left at this time was not, as the IMG imagined, a homogeneous current marching towards revolutionary

Marxism, but included many differentiated layers who, for many different reasons, were involved in the internal LP struggle for 'accountability'. It was important for Marxists to play a role in these developments - championing the positive aspects of the democratic demands without reinforcing the illusions that the LP could be transformed into a fighting Workers Party that would lead the masses to socialism. However, the IMG decided that these developments constituted an ever-leftward moving 'Bennite Current': a new vanguard had been discovered.

The IMG changed its name to the SL; their supporters changed their paper from **Socialist Challenge** to **Socialist Action**. The change of name of the organisation was not simply a question of appearance. They were only to keep a minimal, token, open Trotskyist profile as they subordinated themselves to Benn and the illusory current.

During the summer of 1981, the left in the Labour Party were mounting a strong campaign to remove Healey as deputy leader through the newly created electoral college and replace him with Tony Benn. As Michael Foot was then leader of the Labour Party and widely considered to be the 'caretaker' for the next leader, this challenge was significant for the left.

However, the Benn challenge to Healey has to be seen not only as a backlash against the betrayals of the 1974-79 Labour Government but also in the context of the events at that time. The spring and summer of 1981 was the period of the Irish Republican Hunger Strikes for Political Status; millions mobilised during the People's March for jobs and the first wave of youth uprisings in Brixton, Toxteth and many other inner-city areas. The Thatcher Government's popularity was at an all-time low. Marxists could not simply 'tail-end' Tony Benn. The SLG campaigned around the central slogan of 'Labour to Power - Force a General Election Now!' During the period of the Hunger Strikes, Thatcher was particularly vulnerable. Marxists would have failed in their elementary duty to the working class and the Irish people, if they limited their politics to those of Tony Benn.

NEIL KINNOCK

On the 27th September, 1981, Benn lost to Healey in the electoral college at the Brighton Labour Party Conference by a fraction of one percentage point, thanks to the cave-in of a handful of supposed 'lefts' like Neil Kinnock. Given that Benn was thought to have no chance at the start of the campaign, such a close result could have been the springboard for an increased left offensive. However layers of the Labour and trade union apparatuses, troubled by the potential of the mobilised rank and file, plus the creation of the SDP from a right-wing



Tony Benn accepted the wind-up of the left

split within the PLP, decided to close down the left as an organised force and accepted a 'truce' in the LP on the terms of the right wing. This process of scuttling the organised left, given the defeat of the Hunger Strikers' demands, the winding up of the Peoples' March for Jobs movement and the increasing difficulties facing industrial militants as they came up against the blockages of the Trade Union leadership every time they moved to fight Thatcher, was pushed by the Stalinists through the LCC and accepted by Tony Benn. The RFMC disintegrated and the right wing of the Party went on to the offensive.

BENN'S FRAMEWORK

The SLG, in the first **Socialist Newsletter** after the Brighton Conference, responded in the following front page articles: 'Only the Left can beat the SDP' and 'Organise the Labour Left - Stop the Witch-hunters'. At the Campaign Group of MP's Rally during the 1985 Bournemouth Labour Party Conference, Tony Benn said 'We were wrong to stop fighting in 1981'. Marxists in the Labour Party had a duty to point this out at the time.

The IMG/SL, however, were not challenging the road that Benn, pushed on by the apparatus and the Stalinists, was going down at that time. Instead, they were accepting Benn's framework of the left talking about policy questions - despite the fact that it was crystal clear that the Labour leadership would not fight for them, as was proved during the disastrous 1983 General Election campaign. The IMG/SL were largely absent from battles to prevent the demise of the organised left such as

the fight to stop the Stalinists forcing the CLPD to accept the witch-hunting Register. The IMG/SL slogans of 'For a Labour Government committed to socialist policies' and their involvement in the 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory', in addition to sowing illusions in the Labour Party itself, were bound to come to nothing whilst the Labour leadership was left in the hands of the right wing, who were growing in confidence. The SL continued to pursue their line of fusing with the non-existent 'Bennite current'. With the closing down of the RFMC after the Bishop Stortford 'truce', the Labour left was tending to become increasingly divided and localised. SL supporters were increasingly taking on positions as left functionaries in the apparatus and members of their organisation started to leave revolutionary politics in order to further their careers in the apparatus. This was the logical consequence of the organisation's line of march.

SLG ANALYSIS

The next major test for the SL came with the historic year-long miners' strike. Such a major event in the class struggle not only tested the SL but all the political forces claiming to be part of the Labour movement.

Within weeks of the start of the miners' strike, the SLG published the following analysis in the article; 'TUC and Labour leaders - Fight to Win - or Get Out!':-

"Under current conditions all trade union questions touch on three issues: economic decline, a ruling class driven to attack living standards and rights, and the craven leadership of the working class. Trotskyists and all



militants must focus attention on the third of these as the immediate blockage to a successful fight against the other two. There are no unchangeable or immutable forces at work. The miners can win and the closures can be stopped; so can the Thatcher government be brought down. We have the strength, we need to mobilise it.

There is always the danger that the miners will be isolated and sold out. To avoid this, all sections of conscious trade unionists must be brought into action...on their behalf. If this dispute goes on, and if Kinnock and Hattersley refuse to back the miners, regardless of legal prohibitions, then the leadership and deputy leadership of the Labour Party must be brought into question, relative to the profound interests of

class solidarity. If Kinnock will not back the miners, then Tony Benn must be drafted in to run against Kinnock for the Labour leadership in the autumn and Eric Heffer against Hattersley.

This alone will not be enough to guarantee victory for the miners. There is the linked question of Len Murray - betrayer of ASLEF, seller of the NGA workers, dealer with Thatcher, such is the man. While he remains as head of the TUC, the miners can never be sure of its support. Murray, like Kinnock, must be measured by his actions. In his case, it is already time for him to go - or to be removed by vote at the next TUC Congress.

Defeat for the miners would be a profound blow for all organised workers and the left. Not a defeat of

1926 proportions, but one that more than reverses what the trade unions did to Edward Heath. The stakes are high but Thatcher is far from invincible. If the strike is to win, it will require a serious mobilisation of the real strength of the unions and the Labour Party. That is where we began, with the problem of the relation between the class and the leaders who stand in its way. Our method remains that of Trotsky:

'With the masses - always; with the vacillating leaders - sometimes, but only so long as they stand at the head of the masses! It is necessary to make use of vacillating leaders while the masses are pushing them ahead without for a moment abandoning criticism of these leaders. And it is necessary to break with them at the right time when they turn from vacillation to hostile action and betrayal!'

SOLIDARITY

The ruling class had prepared for the miners' strike thoroughly through the building up of coal stocks, the greater use of nuclear power, the creation of a centralised police force, the drawing-up of plans to move coal by road and the preparations for the use of the DHSS, the law and the courts against the miners. Under these circumstances it was clear that the miners could only win with other sections of the working class taking sustained solidarity strike action, not in the form of token days of action and joining the miners in mass pickets of the power stations. This immediately raised the prospect of bringing down the Thatcher Government and fighting for a Workers' Government. This was a 'normal' industrial dispute; there was no room for a peaceful, compromise solution to the strike. This posed the need to raise the question of the General Strike against the Thatcher Government. The SLG raised the slogan 'Prepare for the General Strike' after it was placed on the order of the day by the Dock Strike and the sequestration of the NUM funds.

ARTHUR SCARGILL

The SL restricted themselves uncritically tail-ending Arthur Scargill. Indeed they proudly boasted that **Socialist Action** was 'Scargillite' paper and explicitly ruled out of order any 'left' criticism of Scargill. 'Scargillism' had become the latest 'vanguard' for the Pabloites.

Clearly, Arthur Scargill is not an ordinary union leader and it was the duty of Marxists to defend him wholeheartedly against the vicious attacks from the ruling class and their agents in the ranks of the labour movement. However, it is also the duty of Marxists to point out his limitations and push him to follow through the logical consequences of

his own positions. Scargill's 'lights out' perspective that the miners alone could bring down the government by shutting the electricity supplies was not appropriate in 1984/5 conditions. Scargill could not differentiate between the treacherous role of the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party - which failed to fight to implement TUC and LP policies - from the unprecedented support for the NUM by hundreds of thousands of the rank and file. It is not sufficient to say the labour movement as a whole must support the NUM without fighting to organise against the traitors who refuse to implement the adopted policies of the movement. Scargill and the NUM not only voted for Kinnock as leader of the Labour Party, but, during the miners' strike, voted for Willis as TUC General Secretary. At no time did Scargill try to organise to fight against the traitors in the bureaucracy.

However, the SL tailed Scargill's every move. Indeed, just before the February 1985 Mineworkers' Defence Committee conference, which was attended by over 1600 delegates, the SL, bowing to the 'downturn theories' of the SWP, contrived to remove from statements, already published and distributed, all reference to General Strike action, including a motion from Keresley NUM branch. This was the

depth that the SL sunk to during this historic strike.

PESSIMISM

We can also see **Socialist Action** mimicking the 'downturn' pessimism of the SWP in the aftermath of the miners' strike. John Ross, writing in the **Socialist Action** of 20th September 1985 says:-

"There is nothing to be overtly optimistic about in the immediate development of British politics. The emerging right wing majority will consolidate itself for some time to come. It is very capable of imposing, and will impose further serious defeats on the British working class movement."

Ross makes no attempt to develop a Marxist understanding of the complex situation opened by the miners' strike. He simply accepts the prevailing mood among layers of the petty bourgeoisie that defeats for the working class are inevitable.

Who does John Ross and **Socialist Action** blame for this situation? The treacherous leaders of the TUC and Labour Party? - No! Speaking at the November 'Alliance for Socialism' conference on the subject of defeats and set-backs suffered by the working class, Ross claimed:-

"It is not the problem, it is not true that the working class are being held back by a small number at the top."

This was no slip of the tongue. **Socialist Action's** editorial on 1st November 1985 stated clearly:-

"...let's dispose of the view...that the leadership always betrays. This is manifestly absurd - as the example of the Scargill leadership of the NUM leadership has shown throughout twelve months of bitter class struggle and since the 'leadership' **does not** (emphasis in original) always betray..."

This statement leads **Socialist Action** to project its own uncritical illusions of Arthur Scargill on to the whole of the apparatus in its defence. **Socialist Action** concludes by blaming the backwardness of the working class for their defeats. This is turning Marxism upside down!

AMNESTY

Let us examine what **Socialist Action** has to say on the question of the Kinnock leadership. After Kinnock's statement denouncing the NUM amnesty motion passed at TUC Congress, they wrote on September 27th 1985:-

"Kinnock has risked the wrath of every party member with such a statement because the question of





Kinnock: monkey to Thatcher's organ-grinder

what attitude to the miners is vital to the party's whole future. Kinnock's statement, so far as accountability is concerned, begins to take the party openly back to the worst days of Wilson and Callaghan.

No one on the left can be in any doubt about the road Neil Kinnock has chosen to travel.

The record of the last two years is that Neil Kinnock has moved from left of centre towards the right so fast it's devastating.

The logical outcome of Kinnock and Willis' line is a coalition between Labour and the Alliance."

In the words of Redmond O'Neill, writing in **Socialist Action** on 11th October 1985:-

"Kinnock and the fighting left are the forces whose struggle will dominate the life of the Labour Party between now and the general election. They represent the basic choices facing the labour movement."

So far so good. But how does **Socialist Action** translate these words

into a campaign within the life of the Labour Party? They have been known to call Kinnock names. Remember the front page in their paper with the picture of Kinnock and the simple message 'Scab!?' John Ross wrote on 8th November:-

"Kinnock in reality has been assigned to play the role of monkey to Thatcher's organ grinder."

However, for Marxists, taunting hardly amounts to a political campaign.

COWARDLY

London Labour Briefing put out a appeal in the summer of 1985 for a discussion on organising the left, including preparations for a challenge to Kinnock. This was derided by **Socialist Action** as 'ultra-left adventurism'. Kinnock may be 'Thatcher's monkey' but he is not to be challenged by the 'fighting left'. Such is the logic of the SL.

Socialist Action has repeatedly tried to palm-off this cowardly stance

by ridiculing the 'kamikaze tactics' of an inopportune challenge for the leadership. However, when their position of not blaming the leaders for betrayals but the working class for backwardness is borne in mind, their stance over a challenge to Kinnock begins to fall into perspective.

The logic of this position has been developed even further by Alan Freeman, who is credited as editor of **Socialist Action**, arguing and voting in a Labour Party meeting even against condemning Neil Kinnock's attacks on the NUM and Liverpool Council at the Bournemouth conference.

We can see that the cutting edge of the SL is determined not by the needs of the working class but by the needs of the bureaucrats. This can be clearly seen in their 'Alliance for Socialism' project. Of course, no Marxist would object to an alliance for socialism but, in reality, the project is 'An Alliance for the Left of the Reformist Apparatus'. Hence, no organisation of the ranks to challenge Kinnock - because Benn is reluctant to run. The talk of concentrating on 'policy issues' instead of 'internal' conflicts is nothing but hot air if they refuse to call for the organisation of the rank and file to prepare a challenge to a treacherous leadership that has made it crystal clear that 'left' policies will be dumped. Have the SL 'forgotten' the disastrous 1983 General Election campaign or Kinnock's statement that:

"It will be on the basis of my design, and the view I take of the Manifesto that we fight the next election."

If the SL imagine that Kinnock will fight for 'socialist policies', they might as well be living on another planet.

GRASSROOTS

Socialist Action's editorial on 22nd November, 1985 started with the statement:

"The 'Alliance for Socialism' weekend, organised by **Socialist Action** on 16-17th November symbolised the politics of this newspaper more than any other single thing it has done."

There can be no doubt that the project does symbolise their Pabloite politics.

In the weeks leading up to the rally, **Socialist Action** published article after article by Benn, Heffer, Diane Abbot, Jeremy Corbyn, etc without any critical comment whatsoever. In the issue following the rally, there was not one speech reported by anyone speaking for **Socialist Action**. Of course, it is not wrong in itself to publish material and hold discussions with left reformists - far from it. However, Marxists cannot view an 'Alliance for Socialism' being built simply by pitching together the views of leading left figures without reference to the need for the organising of the left at grassroots

level on a genuine fighting stance. Further, the almost total absence of any independent Marxist analysis and slogans from this project, highlights the extent of the liquidation into the Labour Party apparatus. The tail-ending of the left bureaucrats dominates their entire activity.

POPULAR FRONTISM

In many important aspects, the present policies of the SL can be compared to a 'left-wing' version of the Popular Frontist politics of the 'Eurocommunists' of **Marxism Today**. The SL consider the defeats of the working class to be a direct consequence of their own backwardness, thereby letting treacherous leaders off the hook. They see Kinnock inevitably moving towards a coalition with the Alliance whilst more and more defeats are inflicted on the working class. They see all this as inevitable because the left is a small minority. In Ross's own words 'We do not need an 'anti-Kinnock Left' but an anti-Thatcher Left'. According to Ross, the left will be a minority for a 'long, long, long period' because of the backwardness of the working class. This scenario, goes on to say that the only way forward for the left is an almost abstract ideological winning of the working class to socialism through converting more and more workers to socialist positions on racism, sexism and Ireland. This is almost religious idealism. Regardless of the left posturing, if the SL continues down this road it will lead, not only to capitulation to Kinnock but to the SL becoming the left apologists for Popular Frontism.

With the increasing degeneration of the SL over a number of years, many of their members have left and

dropped out of organised politics completely. The emergence of the **International** grouping, however, is the first organised tendency to break from the SL in a positive direction

TUC FAILURE

There are contradictions of course, such as **International's** continued support for the USec, despite the fact that the latter has done nothing to check the SL's rightward drift. Nevertheless, the main article in **International** No 1, 'Building a Marxist Movement in Britain' is an important break from the SL's analysis of work in the mass organisations of the working class.

Instead of blaming the working class for the defeat of the miners' strike, Paul Lawson's article points the finger at 'the failure of the TUC and Labour Party leaders to fight from day one of the strike for all-out solidarity action. It correctly identifies Stalinism as 'the strongest counter-revolutionary force in the world working class movement' and discusses the blocking activity of the Stalinists in relation to CND, international issues in the labour movement and particularly their "pernicious conception" of popular frontism, now being vaunted in **Marxism Today**.

International's analysis of the crisis of Social Democracy is particularly significant. Lawson writes:

"Post-1979 events showed that the dominant form of the political crisis inside the working class movement would not be a rapid and sudden outflanking of social democracy and mass left wing splits, but a bitter crisis inside social democracy and a struggle to refashion it to serve the interests of socialism and the working

class...

It was the absolute duty of Marxists to link up with and become part of this major development in British working class politics, and within the limited means which Marxists have at their disposal to help give organisation and leadership to this left wing. As Trotsky once put it, 'the job of Marxists, when faced with left developments inside the working class, was to share the struggle and not the illusions'. This involved giving critical support to Benn's programme against the right wing, and for example championing Benn's deputy leadership campaign."

FUNDAMENTAL BREAK

This is clearly a very different argument from the Socialist League's estimation of Benn as a fundamental break from the British Social Democratic tradition. **Socialist Action's** opportunism and late arrival on the scene meant that they shared the illusions but missed the struggle. The SLG for its part believes that serious Marxist analysis on these developments in the main political organisation of the working class is central to defining a policy without illusions and helping the working class to overcome the historic blockage of the Labour apparatus and reconstituting its movement on a new political basis.

In this sense, the SLG welcomes the **International** break from the SL. We hope they will continue to deepen the discussion on this important question, a discussion which the SLG will pursue in an open and fraternal manner.

BY ALLAN MURDOCH



The OCI commemorates the 40th anniversary of Trotsky's death

The Fourth International, the Permanent Revolution and South Africa

"With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of Permanent Revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses".

Leon Trotsky in 'The Permanent Revolution'

At Socialist Action's recent Alliance for Socialism rally, Tony Benn spoke about a crisis of perspective on the left. Having mentioned the splits in the Communist Party and the WRP, he drew titters from the audience when he referred to differences within Socialist Action over the question of Permanent Revolution.

We have spoken of these problems on a previous occasion in Socialist Newsletter Number 31 (July 1984). In that article, 'Defend the Permanent Revolution', we argued that the revisionist offensive being conducted by the American SWP leaders had as its aim the liquidation of Trotskyism. Today, the process of fragmentation of that Party is already sadly well underway; the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International now recognizes no less than four sections in the USA.

For its part, the SLG does not gleefully relish the crisis of other organisations on the left. We welcome the emergence of currents breaking in a positive direction from revisionism, such as the International Group in Britain. But we recognize that unless a conscious effort is made to resolve the international crisis of Trotskyism on a principled basis, then the biggest effect of splits within the existing groupings claiming to be Trotskyist will be that many militants will just leave revolutionary politics.

REVOLUTION

Part of this lies in the clarification of theoretical principles. This is not an academic exercise: without a correct appreciation of a regime or a given conjuncture, militants have played with their lives in many situations in Latin America and Africa. Today it is South Africa which is convulsed by revolution. What is the character of this revolution? How can it achieve its objectives? What alliances with what social forces are permissible on this road?

Trotsky first formulated his ideas on this question in relation to the



Leon Trotsky: 'a pupil of Lenin's'

character of the approaching Russian Revolution. He summarised his position in the 1919 Preface to 'Results and Prospects', "The Revolution, having begun as a bourgeois revolution as regards its first tasks, will soon call forth powerful class conflicts and will gain final victory only by transferring power to the only class capable of standing at the head of the oppressed masses, namely, to the proletariat. Once in power, the proletariat not only will not want, but will not be able to limit itself to a bourgeois democratic programme...It must adopt the tactics of Permanent Revolution, ie., must destroy the barriers between the minimum and maximum programme of Social Democracy, go over to more and more radical social reforms and seek direct and immediate support in revolution in Western Europe".

APRIL THESES

The leaders of today's American SWP reject this view. They agree that had Trotsky's position been adopted by the Bolsheviks it would have

"increased the likelihood that the Party would have failed to take power in October 1917". They ignore the fact that it was precisely the view that only an immediate struggle for power by the working class could solve Russia's democratic and agrarian questions and begin socialist transformation which Lenin adopted in his 1917 'April Theses' aimed at reorienting the Bolshevik Party around the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets!' Instead, the SWP leaders claim that Trotsky had a 'sectarian view and that he underestimated the peasantry'. Trotsky dealt with this ancient Stalinist platitude in his introduction to 'The Permanent Revolution' in 1929, "In the question of the decisive significance of the agrarian revolution for the fate of our bourgeois revolution, I was, at least from the autumn of 1902, a pupil of Lenin's. That the agrarian revolution and consequently, the general democratic revolution also, could be realised only by the united forces of the workers and the peasants in struggle against the liberal bourgeoisie, was for me, contrary to all the senseless fairy tales of recent years, beyond any doubt. Yet I came

out against the formula 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry', because I saw its shortcoming in the fact that it left open the question of which class would wield the real dictatorship. I endeavoured to show that in spite of its enormous social and revolutionary weight the peasantry was incapable of creating a really independent party and even less capable of concentrating the revolutionary power in the hands of such a party...I drew the conclusion that our bourgeois could solve its tasks radically only in the event that the proletariat, with the aid of the multi-millioned peasantry, proved capable of concentrating the revolutionary dictatorship in its own hands.

What would be the social content of this dictatorship? First of all, it would have to carry through to the end the agrarian revolution and the democratic reconstruction of the state...But the matter could not rest there. Having reached power the proletariat would be compelled to encroach even more deeply upon the relationships of private property in general, that is to take the road of socialist measures".

In the 1930s Trotsky was defending his position against the slanders of the Stalinists. Today it seems to be the leaders of the American SWP who repeat these slanders in order to improve their relations with the Communist Parties of Cuba and El Salvador. These and other Stalinist forces deliberately misrepresent the role of the working class in the revolutionary process in order to justify their conception of revolution by stages, and their alliances with the national bourgeoisie against the working class.

SLANDER

Writing in the first issue of **International** which recently broke from **Socialist Action**, Charlie van Gelderen deals with one such misrepresentation, or as he currently terms it, slander, in relation to South Africa. He explains the ideological battle being waged by the South African Communist Party and the ANC against other liberation forces, such as the National Forum, Black Consciousness and AZAPO, in order to win hegemony over the mass

movement. He goes on to detail a slander by the South African CP against the leader of FOSATU, the independent trade union federation, which alleges that the basis of many union-employer agreements he negotiated was to prevent the ANC from influencing the workers. The specific details of this amalgam need not concern us, what is important is that by their slander, the Stalinists reveal that it is the independence of the working class and their organisations that they most fear in their attempt to control the revolutionary movement.

These attempts by South Africa's Stalinists to steer opposition to the regime away from the road of a workers' revolution has often been camouflaged by left-sounding phraseology. In the 1950s, the SACP denounced the regime as fascist - and then called for an anti-fascist alliance of all opposition forces including 'progressive' bourgeois whites. Working on this line, the ANC called a Congress of the People in 1955, which rejected the revolutionary demands of the South African masses in favour of the slogan 'One man, one vote', and



ERRATUM

CORRECTION to Mike Pearse's article THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION AND SOUTH AFRICA

The last sentence on page 19, which continues on page 20, should read:

Working on this line, the ANC called a Congress of the People in 1955, which rejected the revolutionary demands of the South African masses embodied in the slogan 'One man, one vote' and instead sought an alliance with the imperialist United Party.

sought an alliance with the imperialist United Party. It was in reaction to this policy of conciliation and betrayal that the Black nationalist Pan-African Congress was formed in 1958.

NATIONAL FORUM

In the conditions of today's upsurge in South Africa, many new organisations and coalitions have emerged to fight apartheid. Most publicised in Britain is the United Democratic Front which claims 700 affiliates, including sports associations and community groups, but has no formal political programme. Of particular significance to South Africa's working class, however, is the National Forum Committee. Its 1983 'Manifesto of the Azanian People' declares: "Our struggle for national liberation is waged directly against the system of racial capitalism which holds the people of Azania in servitude to the benefit of the small minority of white capitalists and their allies, the white workers and reactionary fractions of the Black middle class. The struggle against apartheid is the starting point of our struggle for liberation. Apartheid will only be destroyed along with the racist capitalist system."

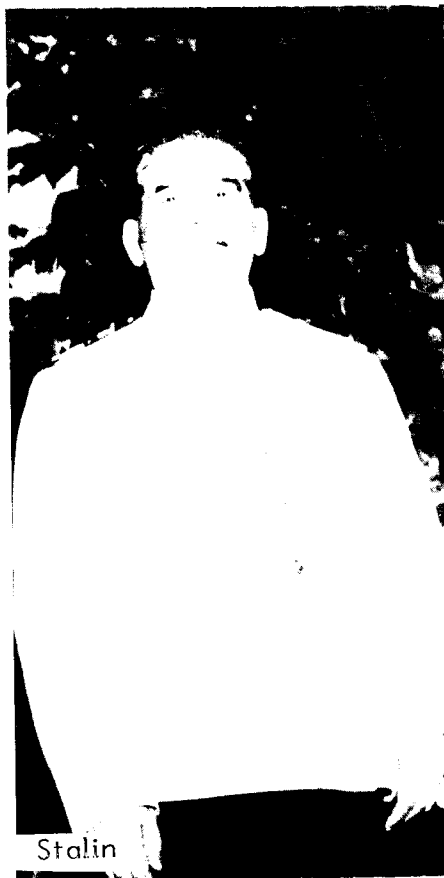
"The Black working class, inspired by revolutionary ideology, is the leading force in our struggle. It alone can eliminate the system as it operates today, for it alone has nothing to lose. It has a world to win in a democratic, anti-racist and socialist Azania."

The National Forum Manifesto goes on to emphasise as one of its central slogans the independent organisation of the working class.

CLASS ALLIANCES

Any analysis of the prospects for the South African revolution must begin with an assessment of different political organisations working among the Black masses, and of the problems caused by the absence of a revolutionary workers' party of the leninist type capable of leading the masses to the seizure of power. It is therefore curious that the November 1st issue of **Socialist Action**, which carries no less than three articles on the related questions of Class Alliances, Democratic Tasks and Permanent Revolution in South Africa, does not deal with these problems in its analysis.

Instead, the question of class alliances is dealt with in the abstract, separate from the question of organisations the Black working class have at their disposal to put themselves at the head of any alliance. Great emphasis is placed on the need for a "bloc of the Black working class and Black rural and urban petty bourgeoisie, under the leadership of the working class - a bloc against the (massively white) bourgeoisie - that is the force that



Stalin

must overthrow apartheid in South Africa" - but the questions of on what political and programmatic basis and what concessions, if any, should the working class make to effect such a bloc - these are left unanswered.

Massive emphasis is placed by **Socialist Action** on the democratic tasks of the South African revolution. Only one revealing paragraph deals with the relation between the democratic questions and socialist demands:

"The socialist revolution in South Africa will grow out of the revolutionary struggle for democracy, against the apartheid state, and not develop by bypassing that struggle."

That is all! But what does it mean? Does it mean that only democratic demands are on the order of the day, and that the economic demands of the Black working class are a diversion? That would be to echo the SACP's slander of FOSATU in its fight for trade union demands. And if it doesn't mean that, why the counterposition between the struggle for democracy and other struggles? Isn't the development of independent struggles of the Black working class the precondition for taking the leadership of any alliance with other oppressed classes in the fight on democratic questions?

EIGHT HOUR DAY

Again, this relationship between the Minimum (democratic) Programme and the Maximum (anti-capitalist) Programme was examined in detail by Trotsky in 'Results and Prospects':

"Take the question of the eight-hour day. It is known, this by no means contradicts capitalist relations, and therefore it forms an item in the minimum programme of Social Democracy. But let us imagine the actual introduction of this measure during a period of revolution, in a period of intensified class passions; there is no question but that this measure would then meet the organised and determined resistance of the capitalists in the form, let us say, of lockouts and the closing down of factories..."

EXPROPRIATION

"For a government that desires to rely on the proletariat, and not on capital, as liberalism does, and which does not desire to play the role of a 'impartial' intermediary of bourgeois democracy, the closing down of factories would not of course be an excuse for increasing the working day. For a workers' government there would be only one way out: expropriation of the closed factories and the organisation of production on them on a socialised basis..."

"To flee before the organised opposition of capital would be greater betrayal of the revolution than a refusal to take power in the first instance..."

"Social Democrats cannot enter a revolutionary government, giving the workers in advance an undertaking not to give way on the minimum programme, and at the same time promising the bourgeoisie not to go beyond it. Such a bilateral undertaking is absolutely impossible to realise. The very fact of the proletariat's representatives entering the government, not as powerless hostages, but as the leading force, destroys the border-line between maximum and minimum programme, that is to say, it places collectivisation on the order of the day."

Trotsky's position is clear - and was first formulated in relation to Russia, a country in which the size of the urban working class was minuscule in relation to South Africa today. Yet **Socialist Action**, despite heading their article 'Permanent Revolution', make no reference to this method of posing the problem and appear to go some way to accommodating the American SWP leadership's Stalinist conception of 'revolution by stages'.

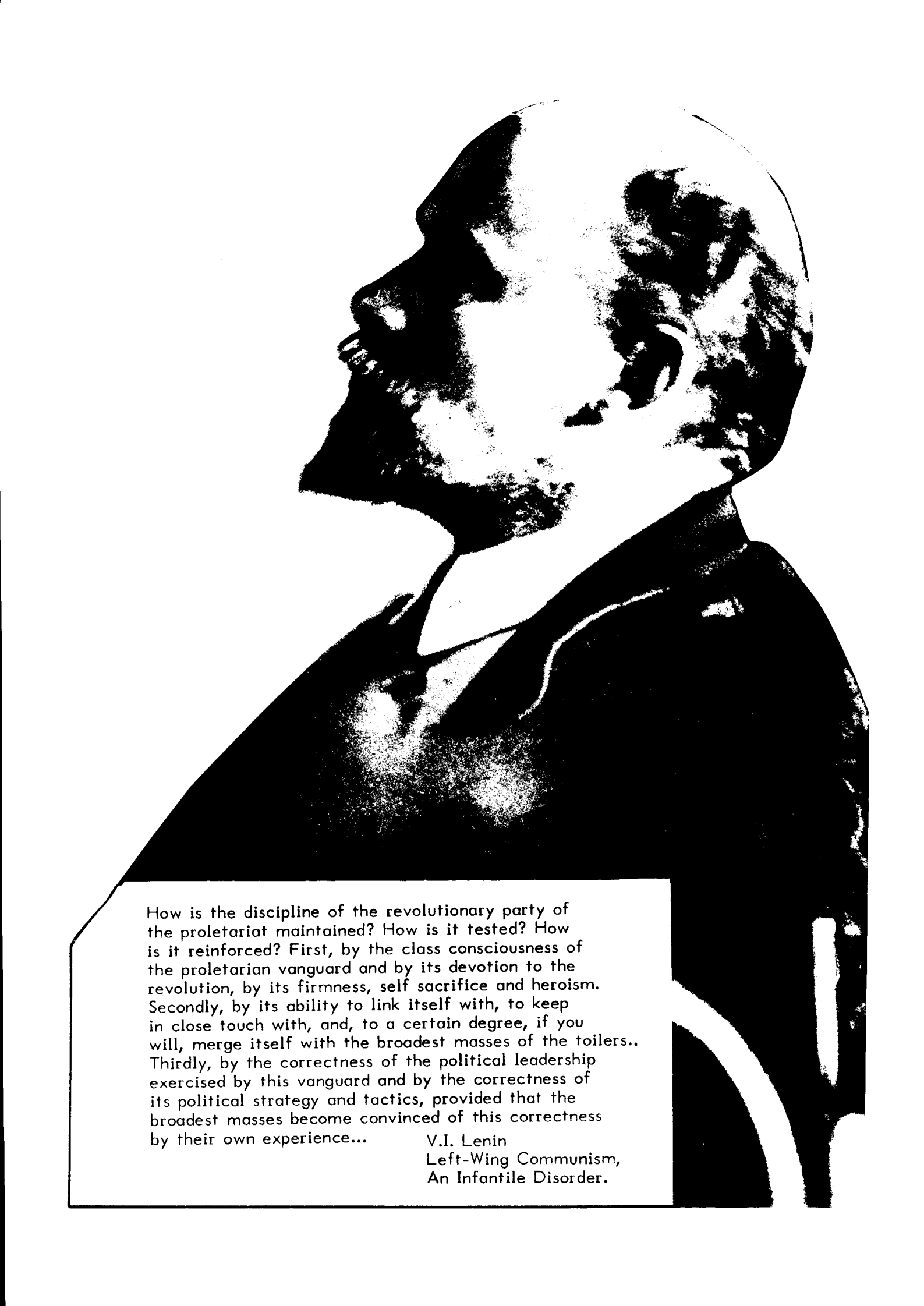
It is unacceptable for revolutionaries to pay lip-service to Permanent Revolution while undermining its meaning in their analysis. **Socialist Action** has a duty - to its own members and the South African revolution - to get off the fence and state clearly where it stands - for or against the theory of Permanent Revolution, for or against the US SWP's leadership offensive against it.

BY MIKE PEARSE
28 November, 1985

Still available..

<p>Socialist Newsletter 10P</p> <p>THE MINERS STRIKE A TROTSKYIST ANALYSIS</p> 	<p>Socialist Newsletter 20p</p> <p>From Miners' Strike To Workers' Government</p>  <p>Problems of leadership and perspective</p>	<p>Socialist Newsletter 20P</p> <p>DEFEND THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION</p> 
<p>FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST Incorporating Socialist Newsletter</p> <p>April May 1985 Number 35 Price 40p</p>  <p>FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST</p> <p>The End of a Strike - The Opening of a New Period European Workers' Conference Russian Revolution 1917 Centrism, Stalinism & the Trade Unions Life of the Sections - Spain - France</p>	<p>FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST Incorporating Socialist Newsletter</p> <p>February March 1985 Number 34 40 Pence</p>  <p>FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST</p> <p>The General Strike Nicaragua CPSA Left</p>	<p>FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST Incorporating Socialist Newsletter</p> <p>Sept-Oct 1985 Number 37 Price 40p</p>  <p>FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST</p>
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SLG Publications



How is the discipline of the revolutionary party of the proletariat maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First, by the class consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its firmness, self sacrifice and heroism. Secondly, by its ability to link itself with, to keep in close touch with, and, to a certain degree, if you will, merge itself with the broadest masses of the toilers.. Thirdly, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard and by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided that the broadest masses become convinced of this correctness by their own experience...

V.I. Lenin
Left-Wing Communism,
An Infantile Disorder.