

Where is the United Secretariat going?

1. Introduction

FOR DECADES, opponents of the largest international organisation claiming the mantle of Trotskyism, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), have been predicting its imminent demise.¹

But today, as it approaches its 14th World Congress, even the USec's most ardent supporters admit that it is in the grip of a prolonged and possibly terminal crisis. Organisationally it is in a shambles, with almost every section suffering, and with a number of countries having two or more USec-related groups. For example, in the United States, USec supporters are split between three separate organisations, with little prospect of unity between them.

South of the Rio Grande, the Mexican section, once the USec's biggest, has blown apart, with both sections supporting a bourgeois candidate, Cardenas, in the last election. The 'jewel in the crown' of the USec in Europe, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) of France, has declined substantially, and expelled its 150-strong youth affiliate, the JCR, in 1992. The LCR leaders, together with those in Mexico and Brazil, are leading the headlong rush to politically liquidate what remains of the USec's Trotskyism. People's Democracy, the section in Ireland, collapsed, although there have been efforts to rebuild a group with a leftward trajectory. The Japanese group has also collapsed, while entire sections in Germany and Spain have been lost in farcical fusions with ex-Maoists. In Germany, the attempt to relaunch a section is bitterly opposed by the USec leadership, which favours USec supporters within the fused United Socialist Party (VSP) entering the ex-Stalinist PDS in order to get some places on the PDS slate in the next election. In Britain, numbers of demoralised militants have left Socialist Outlook, which is now approaching meltdown. It's quite conceivable that the 14th USec World Congress may indeed be the last.

Of course these are tough times for all Trotskyists and the USec leadership is not entirely wrong when it blames the hostile post-1989 political climate for the state of its organisation. However, what it won't or can't face up to is the fundamental cause of the USec's tail-spin and its inability to climb out of it. It is not simply the result of some wrong positions here or some mistaken tactics there, but of an entire political method pursued for over 40 years.

In the class struggle this method exhibits itself as a chronic opportunism – a tendency to adapt Trotskyism to left reformism, Stalinism, petty-bourgeois nationalism and the 'new social movements'. An unstable, impressionistic orientation to struggles and movements has resulted in frequent and sudden 'left' and 'right' turns. This is the product of a short-sighted, overly conjunctural analysis which focuses only on selected events, rather than the broader movement of history. Instead of trying to understand and intervene in developments, the USec tends to uncritically tail-end them. This breeds an opportunist political culture, in which the casualties are the transitional method, the united front tactic, and any semblance of national or international democratic centralism. Organisationally, the USec is characterised by laissez-faire federalism, compounded by cliquism. This criticism is borne out by an examination of its history.

2. The origins of a method

The method of the USec and the effective abandonment of revolutionary Marxism which flows from it are older than the USec itself. Therefore, an ex-

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amination of the method of the USec is in part also an examination of the crisis and political collapse of the Fourth International after Trotsky's death.

The Second World War immediately presented the Fourth International with enormous problems. Organisationally dislocated by wartime conditions, and without an effective leadership after a majority of the International Executive Committee had split in solidarity with Max Shachtman, its members faced persecution at the hands of both fascism and Stalinism. A number of important disputes arose within the movement – over the proletarian military policy, the attitude taken to resistance movements and revolutionary defeatism, as well as questions of perspective – and there were splits in a number of countries.

Despite everything, the Fourth International could claim to represent the only revolutionary-internationalist current in the world workers' movement. Its members set to rebuilding the International with enthusiasm after 1945. However, they were in the main prisoners of a false 'orthodoxy', which replaced the study of living reality with the pre-war prognoses of Trotsky. He had anticipated that the war would give rise to a chain of revolutionary situations, which would fatally undermine the bureaucratic leaderships of the workers' movement in the West, and the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

Instead, the Soviet bureaucracy survived the war, and extended its influence throughout eastern Europe. Revolutionary situations rapidly subsided, and capitalism began to stabilise and begin its upward post-war cycle. US imperialism, in particular, emerged from the war greatly strengthened and implemented the Marshall Plan. The FI leadership, no doubt sincerely attempting to uphold Trotsky's legacy, failed to test his prognoses against reality and experience. As the 1946 International Conference announced: 'The war has aggravated the disorganisation of capitalist economy and destroyed the last possibilities of relatively stable equilibrium in social and international relations.'²

Few were opposed to this line within the FI. The British RCP was rewarded for its opposition by being arbitrarily split in 1947. The International Secretariat recognised the minority under Gerry Healy as its de facto section. Then, when the two groups reunited in 1949, the majority was subordinated to the minority, and Healy proceeded to purge the group. The basic perspectival errors of the FI leadership were allowed to go uncorrected. The FI's Second World Congress in 1948 already gave grounds for thinking that the organisation had lost its sense of balance, when it argued that the states of eastern Europe remained capitalist, and that no fundamental change had taken place. There were already predictions that 'the coming World War' (sic) would be transformed into an 'international Civil War'.³

Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform in 1948, shortly after the Second World Congress, acted as a catalyst for the systematising of these errors of perspective into a method. The FI's leadership took Tito's break with Stalin as a break with Stalinism⁴. Not only was this confirmation of the predicted crisis of Stalinism and the revolutionary upsurge; it also carried the promise of a 'revolutionary' ally. There followed a series of fawning open letters addressed to the Yugoslav leadership, which included a proposal to build a new, joint International. The Partisan War was described first by Michel Pablo and later by the entire FI

leadership as a 'proletarian revolution', resulting in a workers' state with purely quantitative deformations. Thus developed the position, now a hallmark of the USec, that genuine workers' revolutions could be led by non- or even anti-Trotskyist forces. Indeed, Pablo's overtures to Titoism involved a revision of core Trotskyist positions on Stalinism, on the revolutionary party and on the united front tactic.

The Yugoslav crisis was a watershed in the development of the FI. Only in 1950 did the FI recognise that capitalism had been overthrown in eastern Europe. Once it had, it rapidly somersaulted from Stalinophobia to Stalinophilia. In his report to the Third World Congress in 1951, Pablo argued that the CPs 'under certain exceptional conditions... possess the possibility of projecting a revolutionary orientation'.⁵ The 'exceptional conditions' envisaged by Pablo included an imminent wave of 'war-revolution', which would bypass the building of open Trotskyist parties. The Trotskyists should enter the mass Stalinist parties to try to exert the necessary pressure to give them the 'revolutionary orientation' of which they were supposedly capable. Pablo's version of entryism had nothing in common with the united front tactic or Trotsky's 'French turn'. It was a long-term strategic entry 'of a special type' (*sui generis*) involving the 'temporary' abandonment of an open fight for a revolutionary programme.

A clear example of this method transferred to Latin American soil was the FI's response to the Bolivian revolution of 1952. The FI's Bolivian section, the POR, by virtue of its strategic position in the workers' movement, was in a position to make a real impact on events.⁶ But it failed to advance an independent revolutionary programme distinct from that of the bourgeois-nationalist MNR, adopting the slogan 'Restoration of the constitution of the

country through the formation of an MNR government which obtained a majority in the 1951 elections'.⁷



The heyday of the USec: thousands march through Lima in July 1978 as Hugo Blanco returns from exile

country through the formation of an MNR government which obtained a majority in the 1951 elections'.⁷

Such positions were supported or accepted by the entire FI leadership – Pablo, Mandel, Cannon, Healy and the rest. The only partial opposition came from the majority of the French section, which from a limited perspective balked at the pro-Stalinist turn of the leadership. The abrupt split in the Fourth International in 1953, led by the SWP and supported by Healy's 'Group', Lambert's French majority and a few smaller sections – who formed the International Committee (IC) – was unprincipled. It was motivated primarily by organisational considerations and the development of pro-Pablo minorities in the US and Britain, rather than the need for a consistent struggle against Pablo's method. In an attempt to paint themselves in 'orthodox colours' and

to disguise the lack of principled political differences, the IC leadership (and in particular Healy) blamed all the problems of post-war Trotskyism on 'Pabloism'. To this day, all the groupings descended from the IC tradition maintain this charade.

We do not believe in the doctrine of original sin. Subjectively, Pablo was a revolutionary; politically, he was a centrist, whose errors were rooted in the difficult post-war objective conditions. The best description of his method is 'super-objectivism', in which the subjective factor takes second place to the unstoppable 'laws of history'. Hence the need for a conscious struggle for revolutionary leadership goes by the wayside. Under Pablo and Mandel, and later under Mandel, Maitan and Frank, Trotsky's remark in the *Transitional Programme* that the 'laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus' is distorted into a non-dialectical objective evolutionism. Objective factors are given a pre-determined nature, practically separate from any subjective factors as is shown by this statement from a 1970 document, 'The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism': 'Of the two forces determining the orientation of the masses – the death agony of capitalism which unleashes immense revolutionary forces on a world scale and the policy of the reformist and Stalinist bureaucratic apparatuses, which play the role of a brake on the masses, it is the first which is coming more and more to the fore.'

This method and its associated political practice has dogged first the International Secretariat (IS) and then the USec throughout their history. On the objective side there is historical determinism, where history is seen in terms of pre-determined laws rather than tendencies, on the subjective side (and as a consequence of super-objectivism), there is a lack of conscious struggle, and a pandering to bureaucrats and reformists, rather than a sustained attempt to fight for leadership. Therefore, the Pablo-Mandel IS failed to fight consistently for political revolution in the crises that gripped Stalinism in the 1950s, preferring to look for a 'reformist' wing of the bureaucracy which could follow the course of Tito or Mao's CCP, which had led a 'victorious revolution' and had 'ceased to be a Stalinist party in the proper meaning of the term'.

bert insisted that Cuba remained a bourgeois state, and refused to countenance rejoining the 'Pabloites', the SWP and a majority of IC sections reunited with the IS to form the USec in 1963.

3. The politics of the 'next big thing'

This fusion was based from the very outset on the same bankrupt political method which started with Pablo and was developed by Mandel, Frank and the rest. The USec's founding document, *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*,⁸ argued with typical 'optimistic' objectivism that 'continual mass movements have drawn one country after another into the process of political revolution'. Organisational federalism was also built into the USec's foundations, whereby the SWP and the European leadership concluded a 'spheres of influence' agreement: neither would interfere in the other's back yard.

Within a year, the USec was confronted with the logic of its own method when its only section with mass influence, the LSSP in Ceylon, joined a coalition government led by Bandaranaike's SLFP. Mandel could not say that he had not been warned. In 1956, the LSSP had offered the MEP government 'responsive co-operation', and in 1960 it had given the SLFP 'critical support' – for which it was mildly criticised by the IS. But the IS had refused to intervene and organise a left faction on the grounds that the left wing of the LSSP 'defended correct, principled positions, but in a political form that the International considered sectarian and hardly likely to convince the rank and file to oppose the party's political concessions'.⁹

At its Ninth World Congress in 1969, the USec took its turn to petty-bourgeois nationalism a step further by adopting guerrilla warfare as the strategy of the 'third world revolution' (sic). This ill-conceived turn resulted in a loss of numbers of its militants in Latin America, and a decade of bitter factional struggle within the USec between the international majority supporters of the turn led by Mandel and Maitan and the opponents led by the SWP(US).¹⁰ Although many of the 'orthodox' criticisms levelled by the SWP and its allies in the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency/Leninist-Trotskyist Faction were correct, in so far as they defended

the building of proletarian parties as opposed to the ultra-left lunacies of guerrillaism and the theory of *foci*, this did not mark a clear break with the SWP's previous method and policies. Elsewhere we have described the LTF as a 'centrist combination'.

Meanwhile in the metropolitan countries the turn was to the 'new youth vanguard'. Students would act as 'detonators' of the struggle; universities would be 'red bases'. Nowhere in this scenario was there a serious orientation to fighting in the labour movement against its reformist leadership, with the result that the USec was isolated from the wave of industrial struggles which took place in the early 1970s. This was rationalised by the development of the theory of the 'new mass vanguard', which bore a close resemblance to the outlook of the New Left.

With the theory came wildly objectivist perspectives. Together, the movements of students, workers and women were said to form a 'totality of forces active independently and to the left of traditional bureaucratic leaderships of the mass movement'.¹¹

The new theories of the USec were put to a practical test in two revolutions. Two USec groups were active in the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-75. The LCI, backed by the Mandel-led majority, adapted itself to the 'mass vanguard' of workers, soldiers and stu-

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dents by sharing, not combatting, its illusions in the left wing of the Armed Forces Movement. Meanwhile, the PRT, supported by the SWP, proceeded to tail-end the Socialist Party and foster workers' illusions in bourgeois democracy.¹²

Even worse was to follow in Nicaragua in 1979. Having mended its fences with the SWP, the new USec majority took its adaptation to petty-bourgeois nationalism a stage further: it justified the Sandinista government's expulsion from the country in August 1979 of the Simon Bolivar Brigade, which had been organised by the PST of Colombia and other Latin American sections of the USec led by Nahuel Moreno.¹³ As a result of this, on the eve of the 11th World Congress in November 1979, Moreno's Bolshevik Faction and the smaller Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency declared a split, taking with them the vast majority of USec supporters in Latin America.

Surveying the wreckage and confusion caused by its disastrous policies since 1969, the USec used the 11th Congress to offer a 'self-criticism' of the 'guerrilla turn' and announce an orientation to the 'traditional bureaucratic leaderships'. But the underlying political method which had produced the adaptation to guerrillism in the first place was not questioned, nor were any of its other liquidationist positions. Therefore, the new orientation to social democracy and Stalinism, and to the petty-bourgeois nationalist movements in Nicaragua and Grenada carried further dangers.

The warning signs had already been present in Mandel's 'Social-Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat' (1977) which spoke of 'the extension of democratic rights for the toilers beyond those already enjoyed under conditions of advanced bourgeois democracy'. The Sandinistas' Government of National Reconstruction was enrolled as a 'workers' and farmers' government', even though it defended private property and attacked, and then wound up, the Sandinista Defence Committees which, given revolutionary leadership, could have developed into organs of workers' power.

Recoiling from its earlier 'orthodoxy', the SWP adopted the new turn with enthusiasm, launching a public attack on the theory of permanent revolution in 1982 and arguing for its replacement with the Stalinist theory of 'stages'. The Australian SWP, which had previously been closely linked to its American mentors, took this contempt for Trotskyism to its logical conclusion, and split in 1984. The American SWP, although it had expelled dozens of USec supporters in the 1980s, and had become reduced to a publicity bureau for Fidel Castro, Nelson Mandela, Daniel Ortega and Maurice Bishop, remained formally in contact with the USec until it finally split on the eve of the 13th World Congress in 1990.

The majority drew back from the SWP's conclusions, but not the liquidationism which produced them. Indeed, little was done to challenge the SWP's path, either at a political level or through organisational measures. But whereas the USec had been able to make substantial gains in the 1970s despite its internal problems, the 1980s saw a series of setbacks, which in turn produced increasingly desperate efforts to gain a foothold in the 'new social movements'. In France, the LCR turned towards the 'red-green' electoral campaign of the Stalinist 'renovator' Pierre Juquin. The result was little short of disastrous: Juquin polled fewer votes in 1988 than Arlette Laguiller of Lutte Ouvrière, and the LCR lost members.

In Britain, the International Marxist Group, which in 1970 had adopted an ultra-left 'no vote for Labour' position and as recently as 1979 had stood Socialist Unity candidates against Labour, had by the early 1980s thoroughly adapted itself to left reformism. In 1982, the IMG changed its name to the Socialist League and launched *Socialist Action*, a paper whose politics were left-Bennite at best. But this pro-

duced nothing worthwhile. Indeed, it was Militant which picked up recruits by criticising Benn's limitations.

The decline of the Bennite left after the 1983 election produced tensions within the Socialist League and a split occurred in 1985. Socialist Action, led by John Ross, has pursued an increasingly opportunist course, and is now politically indistinguishable from the Campaign Group of MPs – Ross now works for Ken Livingstone. The International Group, led by Phil Hearse and Bob Pennington, drew back from Ross's ultra-liquidationism, and in 1987 fused with Alan Thornett's Socialist Group – the battered refugees from the Workers Socialist League's disastrous fusion with Socialist Organiser – to form Socialist Outlook.

Outlook's own brand of adaptation to left reformism has been carried out under the banner of building a 'class struggle left wing' – a nebulous concept at the best of times, which in the hands of slippery opportunists has been used to justify propaganda blocs with left reformists at the expense of the Trotskyist programme and the united front tactic.

The 12th World Congress in 1985 saw the USec's political crisis deepen. It refused (albeit by a narrow majority) to agree to the demand by exiled Iranian Trotskyists for a debate on the Iranian revolution. Accommodation to Khomeini by all currents within the USec had led to confusion and the subsequent break up of the section. International democratic centralism was effectively junked, and the USec's implicit federalism was made explicit. The congress decided that in future, the USec should function as 'an organisation of sections'.

This served to strengthen the control of the leadership of national sections against outside 'interference'. The consequences of this were to be seen in Spain where the 700-strong USec section maintained an alliance with a Maoist group, with the approval of the international leadership. Eventually, in 1990, the two groups fused on the understanding that no one in the new group could be a member of the USec. (There were not even the individual USec membership rights that existed in Germany after the USec section fused with a larger group of ex-Maoists.) Despite opposition to the basis of the fusion, the USec's federalism meant that no framework existed to wage an international struggle. The World Congress was unable to make a decision. Once again the national 'class struggle method' had triumphed over international democratic centralism. An entire section was lost with no discussion, no vote, and worst of all, no lessons learned.

4. The final liquidation?

Throughout its chequered history, the USec has always managed to pull back from the logical end result of its liquidationist course. Hence the turn away from guerrillism, and the split with the SWP and its allies, in which Mandel posed as the defender of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. In common with the other epigones of Trotsky – Healy, Lambert, Moreno and the rest – Mandel and his team always maintained a formal identification with such core Trotskyist positions as permanent revolution, political revolution, the *Transitional Programme* and the united front, even if, in practice, they failed to fight for them, or at least, fight for them consistently or adequately.

This reflected the fact that within the USec there have always been those prepared to fight – albeit inadequately – for Trotskyist politics, and oppose liquidation. As a result, the USec has pursued an unstable oscillation between Trotskyism and whichever milieu it is trying to adapt to at the time.

However, the signs are that this situation is about to change, and that rather than merely debasing Trotskyism, the USec is about to liquidate itself. The USec leadership, now dominated by younger elements to the right of Mandel, has concluded that in

the present period of retreats and demoralisation resulting from the wave of attacks on the working class and the collapse of Stalinism, there can be no prospect of building independent Trotskyist parties to fight for the leadership of the class. Instead, the task is the 'recomposition of the workers' movement'.

Of course, if this 'recomposition' were to be carried out on a revolutionary basis, it wouldn't present any problem. In the hands of the USec leadership, however, it becomes a justification for yet another turn – towards the leaderships of the Brazilian Workers' Party (where the USec group supported the expulsion of supporters of the LIT), Filipino Stalinism, and petty-bourgeois green and pacifist movements. In eastern Europe, the USec has failed to build a single section, despite the opportunities offered by its relatively high international profile and Mandel's literary reputation. Instead, it has attempted to promote individuals like Petr Uhl in Czechoslovakia, who became a press officer for Havel's restorationist government. The hope is that when things improve, a current might eventually form around USec-friendly intellectuals and left bureaucrats. In the meantime, all that the USec can offer workers and youth in eastern Europe who are interested in Trotskyism is a correspondence society for intellectuals.

In any event, the question of 'recomposition' is wrongly posed. It implies a situation far worse than the admittedly bad one which exists – a situation involving the destruction of independent workers' organisations on an international scale. Of course, we do not minimise the effects of the 100-year low point in strikes in Britain, but does this mean, as some members of the British section have argued, that the situation in the labour movement is 'hopeless'? Does the collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe mean the 'end of the project of 1917', as leaders of the USec in France and Belgium claim?

This defeatist perspective goes some way to explaining how Alain Krivine, the leader of the LCR, signed a statement urging imperialist intervention in ex-Yugoslavia. After all, if there is no possible independent role for the working class, why not rely on the UN, and support a certain amount of charity work?

Such political bankruptcy is shot through with the super-objectivism which has always been a central feature of USec politics. At first glance it seems light years away from the heady revolutionary optimism of the 1960s and 1970s, with its almost mystical faith in the colonial, Arab, or Central American revolutions (sic). What is common to both periods, however, is that the subjective factor is either devalued, or totally absent. (By the subjective factor we mean the struggle for revolutionary theory and practice.) The subjective factor is as vital in periods of retreat as it is in periods of revolutionary upsurge.

This time, it seems the USec leadership could be carrying its thoughts through to their logical conclusion. It argues that the collapse of Stalinism means that the Trotskyist analysis of the Soviet Union and the identification with the Left Opposition will lose relevance as distinguishing features of the revolutionary tradition. Whereas in the past we have seen the federalism of the USec leading to the liquidation of national sections, now the whole International is up for grabs. The current trendy expression is that it is perfectly reasonable to conceive of a 'revolutionary' International in which Trotskyists would be in a minority. Thus the theoretical and programmatic conquests of the past 70 years can be bargained away for the sake of an unprincipled 'regroupment' with politically degenerate and discredited Maoism, Stalinism and Castroism. Trotskyism is reduced to being merely a critique of Stalinism; hence no Stalinism, no Trotskyism!

There is opposition within the USec to this course from forces such as Socialist Action in the United States, and

the Matti tendency in France, both of which cheered uncritically for the 'democratic' counter-revolution in eastern Europe at the last World Congress. They combine an 'optimistic' reading of the outcome of the collapse of Stalinism with an 'orthodox'-sounding critique of the majority's liquidationism, calling for the building of sections in every country. Their 'unconditional' support for the capitalist reunification of Germany and for pro-capitalist nationalist movements represents nothing more than a mirror-image of the majority's objectivism. As such, they do not represent a principled alternative.

5. What is to be done?

The USec is on its last legs. This is not a sectarian insult but a reality. It is in political crisis and organisational collapse, and is now probably half the size it was five years ago. The departure of most of its Latin American sections in 1979, and of the SWP and its allies, the loss of the Spanish section, the collapse of the 2,000-strong Mexican section, and the dismal state of the French section, including the loss to Militant of the JCR youth group, means that its claims to represent 70 per cent of Trotskyists internationally are extremely dubious. Boasts that the USec alone represented the continuity of the Fourth International have been undercut, not least by the USec's own trajectory, while the attempt to portray all other Trotskyist currents as 'sectarian' sound increasingly like sectarian self-justification.

Whatever its size, its federalism prevents it from acting as an effective international movement. This can be seen quite clearly by the near-absence of USec practical initiatives. International Workers Aid has been the only campaign in recent times in which the USec has had some sort of co-ordinated practical activity at an international level. However, the USec has tried to build IWA as a social campaign which appeals more to liberal consciences than to the class instincts of workers. Still, at least there is some sort of international co-ordination, rather than the usual attitude which is to leave national sections to do their own thing. And at least the USec's involvement in IWA has been more successful than its last international venture – the lamentable Third World Debt campaign, which was based on conscience-stricken 'new social movements' rather than the working class, and was rewarded with only a handful of demonstrators in London.

This lack of co-ordinated activity really does show the stagnant character of the USec – short on practice, bereft of ideas and unable to rejuvenate itself. National sections are thus left to suffer. The absence of international democratic centralism combined with a political culture based on slippery opportunism and short-termism are the inevitable results of a flawed political method. Many USec sections are close to collapse, with members who have given years to the movement quitting in despair. Socialist Outlook is in the grip of a crisis, without any clear perspective – a fact underlined by the recent defection of *Socialist Outlook* editor and long-time national and international leader Phil Hearse to Militant Labour. He comments that Socialist Outlook 'is collapsing into being a network of labour movement activists . . . incapable of building itself and reaching out to new layers . . . Socialist Outlook is on the margin of the margins.' One really has to question the health of an organisation whose members frequently carry out good work in the labour movement, but whose internal situation is such that it loses its main leader to a more politically degenerate organisation.

No wonder that members are angry. But there are those who want to fight for Trotskyism and build an organisation, whether in the USec or not, which can do that. The USec is not the only Trotskyist organisation in crisis. Trotskyism as a whole is beset by organisational fragmentation and politi-

cal disorientation and confusion – compounded by the political events of the past five years.

The solution is not just to go and join some other organisation which has all the answers, which carries out exemplary work in the class struggle, whose branches and sections are growing, with an exemplary political culture and internal life, because there isn't one. Therefore we are not simply saying: 'Join us and everything will be all right.'

What we think is necessary is a regroupment of those genuinely revolutionary forces claiming adherence to Trotskyism. The USec is not the Fourth International; it has no political continuity with the organisation founded by Trotsky. The USec is one of several organisations claiming to be the FI, and therefore only one of a number of sites in which struggles can be launched for a serious regroupment of revolutionaries, with the aim of rebuilding a Trotskyist International.

Opportunist regroupments of the sort Militant is angling for, based on brokered fusions worked out by already discredited leaderships, will prove worthless. They will either fall apart, or replicate the USec's federalism and opportunism. The brief history of the Moreno-Lambert Parity Committee, which from 1980-81 could claim to be the largest Trotskyist International, should be sufficient warning of this type of unprincipled bloc.

What is needed is a fight on a number of key programmatic and political tasks: the transitional method, the united front, the struggle against liquidationism and the super-objective determinism of the USec leadership, the permanent revolution in the semi-colonial countries, the analysis of Stalinism and reformism, and the building of Trotskyist parties in each country.

We are not advocating a talk-shop. Revolutionaries inside and outside the USec clearly need to relate to each other not just on a theoretical level, but on the basis of practical activity in the class struggle. But as this analysis of the USec has attempted to show, political errors are often the result of a wrong theory and method. To correct political problems is a theoretical as well as a practical task. The danger is that the culture in the USec is such that national sections often believe that if they keep up their practical activity, political problems will somehow resolve themselves.

In the interests of a serious approach to regroupment, we therefore ask USec comrades to discuss with us the practical and theoretical conclusions to be drawn from the present situation.

NOTES

1. See for example the cover of *Fourth International* (IC), Winter 1969/70: 'The class struggle grows sharper – New crisis for revisionists'.
2. *Fourth International* (SWP), June 1946, 'The New Imperialist Peace and the Building of the Parties of the FI'.
3. *Fourth International* (SWP), June 1948.
4. See 'The Fourth International and Yugoslavia (1948-50)', *Workers News* No.32, July 1991.
5. *Fourth International* (SWP), Nov-Dec 1951.
6. See *Revolutionary History*, Vol.4, No.3, Summer 1992, *Bolivia - The Revolution Derailed?*, and *Bolivia: The Revolution the 'Fourth International' Betrayed*, LRP(US), 1987.
7. Interview in *Militant* (US), May 12-19, 1952.
8. Ed. W. Reissner, *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*, Pathfinder, 1974.
9. P. Frank, *The Fourth International: The Long March of the Trotskyists*, Ink Links, 1979, p.116.
10. See *International Information Bulletin: Discussion on Latin America (1968-1971)*, nd., and J. Hansen, *The Leninist Strategy of Party Building*, Pathfinder, 1979.
11. *Intercontinental Press*, December 23, 1974, 'Thesis on Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe'.
12. See B. Murphy, 'Twenty years since the Portuguese Revolution', *Workers News* No.52, Nov-Dec 1994.
13. See *Intercontinental Press*, October 22, 1979, 'Statement on Simon Bolivar Brigade', and 'The Simon Bolivar Brigade', *Workers News* No.21, December 1989.