Their Master’s Voice: Leaders of the WRP and the ICFI together for one of the last big rallies, the 4,000 strong Karl Maxx Memorial Rally at the Alexander Pavilion in March 1983. The five leaders split five ways after Healy's expulsion in October 1985; Gerry Healy, The Marxist party, Mike Banda, Communist Forum; Cliff Slaughter, WRP, (Workers Press); David North, Workers League (US) and effective leader of the post split ICFI, of which the WL is a sympathising section, Rodney Atkinson, then a YS National Committee member, now inactive; Claire Dixon, WRP (News Line).
Contents

Preface..............................................................................................................................Page 3
Introduction.......................................................................................................................Page 4
Chapter 1: The Break-up .................................................................................................Page 9
Chapter 2: The Implosion Continues ..............................................................................Page 20
Chapter 3: Interregnum & Glasnost 1986 .................................................................Page 32
Chapter 4: Problems of Philosophy............................................................................. Page 50
Chapter 5: Chauvinism on the Irish Question ..............................................................Page 63
Chapter 6: Break with the Irish Workers League.........................................................Page 73
Chapter 7: Social Relations of the WRP .................................................................Page 85
Chapter 8: The debate on Stalinism ..............................................................................Page 92
Chapter 9: The relationship with the LIT .................................................................Page 115
Chapter 10: Strange Bedfellows.............................................................................. page 125
Chapter 11: Wasted Journeys .....................................................................................Page 139
Chapter 12: No Question of Principle ........................................................................Page 155
Chapter 13: End Game for the LIT and the WRP .....................................................Page 169
Chronology 1984-90 ...............................................................................................Page 182
Glossary of publications and organisations..........................................................Page 184

Published by
The Socialist Fight Group
PO Box 59188, London, NW2 9LJ,
Socialist_Fight@yahoo.co.uk
(CreateSpace-Assigned)
ISBN-10: 1468117076
© Gerald Joseph Downing.

From page opposite This episode — not simply the developments in the WRP itself, but the way in which other tendencies identifying with Trotskyism related to this process — contains important lessons for all who are serious about resolving the crisis of the Fourth International. The RIL is therefore publishing this first draft of comrade Downing’s balance sheet, and we invite comments and discussion on this document.

Tony Gard for the RIL December 1991
Preface

This publication was originally produced in 1991 when I was a member of the RIL, British section of the ITC. Whilst I would formulate some questions differently now (there never was any proof that photographs of oppositionists were sold to the Iraqi regime which resulted in executions), nonetheless I defend all the main political conclusions and characterisations of the WRP and all other political groups made in the work. The WRP Control Commission report by Norman Harding and Larry Kavanagh on Healy’s sexual and physical abuses is now included as an appendix at the end of Chapter 1.

This work correctly identified the main gains made by the party in the period of its resurgence, the Interregnum and Glasnost of 1986 as told in Chapter 3. These were on Ireland, youth perspectives, women’s oppression and the Labour Party. All these issues involved the crucial question of how to relate to the working class. These developments were repudiating the corrupt relationship with both the trade union bureaucracy in Britain and the Arab bourgeoisie in the Middle East and North Africa, the capitulation to the British state on the question of Ireland, the issues of the history of the Fourth International, and the special oppression of women, gays and lesbians.

This progressive struggle was brought to an end after December 1986 by a desperate and beleaguered leadership when they opened relationships with Moreno’s LIT and installed Leon Perez in the WRP HQ as a LIT plenipotentiary with access to all documents and meetings. The capitulation of most of the leading leftist oppositions to this situation in the January 1987 CC began the process of removing the leftist elements who had provided the epoch of Glasnost with its leadership; Chris Bailey was removed as leader of international affairs, Dave Bruce of Editor of Workers Press and this author as Secretary of the Irish Commission. The crucial desertion was that of Simon Pirani at that January CC, he moved from the leadership of the left wing of the party to the leadership of the right wing in just six months. He thereby revealed himself as the man of no principles that some had charged him with all along. The effort he made in 1986 was abandoned as soon as it ran into real difficulties and he was forced either to take a stand on his declared principles or abandon them. After a brief hesitation he forsook them all.

Now it was back to unprincipled manoeuvres which demoralised the best elements and saw the terminal degeneration of the WRP back to worse positions on almost all issues than it had before the 1985 split. The WRP (News Line) has a better (though still as wrong as in 1985) position on Libya than almost all the WRP splinters. It can only be hoped that the republication of this book makes possible for some of those comrades from that time to re-engagethe struggle for Trotskyism.

Gerry Downing December 2011

Original Preface

Gerry Downing joined the Workers’ Revolutionary party in 1976. He was one of the very few Irish worker militants in the party, and became one of its leading activists in west London - a well-known militant in the building workers’ union UCATT, a member of Brent Trades Council, a WRP candidate in the 1979 general election and the council elections. In the 1985 split in the WRP Gerry Downing supported the majority (WRP Workers Press) which backed the expulsion of its former general secretary, Gerry Healy. He was elected to its Central Committee in March 1986, which appointed him the first ever Secretary of the Irish Commission. He became a key figure in the fight to assert principled Trotskyist politics in the WRP and later in the Internationalist Faction. He conducted a prolonged struggle against the influence of British chauvinism on the question of Ireland, and in the early months of 1987 he produced the only documents examining and criticising the record of the Morenoite international organisation (Workers International League - LIT), with which the WRP leaders were developing a close relationship.

In the Summer of the same year he played a leading role in forming the International Faction in the WRP, which left the party after its February 1988 Congress. The International Trotskyist Committee and its British section, the Revolutionary Internationalist League, responded positively to proposals from the WRP for an international conference of Trotskyists. We saw the debates and struggles opened up by the explosion in the WRP as an important opportunity to engage in a significant fight for Trotskyism. We therefore supported all serious attempts to fight for principled politics and reassert the Trotskyist programme within the WRP.

See page opposite
Introduction

The WRP explosion in October 1985 had a profound impact on all those who regard themselves as Trotskyists throughout the world. The fragmentation of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI or IC) (1), one of the main claimants, historically, to the ‘continuity of Trotskyism’ was a dramatic event, whose repercussions are still being felt.

This is my political evaluation of the WRP (Workers Press) in the period after it split with and subsequently expelled its founder and long time British Trotskyist and IC leader, Gerry Healy (2), in October 1985.

The basic premise that I have set out to demonstrate is, that despite sincere efforts on the part of the rank-and-file of the party’s members and some of its leaders, it failed in the task it set itself in the immediate aftermath of the expulsion of Healy; that of the regeneration of Trotskyism and the orientation to the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

The revolutionary impulse of the party to seek out the reasons for the degeneration of the Trotskyist movement in the post-war period was wrecked because those leaders, who had been responsible, with Healy, for many of the betrayals of Trotskyist principles in the past were unable to overcome their own corruption.

Obituary

The Workers Press now attempts to prove, as Stalin’s heirs did, that one man was responsible for all the crimes and betrayals of the past, while the present leadership had fought those betrayals and had contributed everything positive that there was in the history of British Trotskyism. This is the line taken in their belated obituary of Healy in the paper (10 March 1990). It could be termed the ‘cult of the individual WRP style’.

It is not an official obituary, only the opinion of some unnamed ‘leading comrades’. Obviously in the three months between Healy’s death on 14 December 1989 and when the article appeared, the WRP had failed to agree an official version. It combines historical distortions with downright lies, hoping it seems that the membership will not seek out the truth. For instance on page 6 of Workers Press it claims that:

“...Healy, through personal relations separated entirely from the Central Committee and the party as a whole, was stroking the backs of reformists such as GLC leader Ken Livingstone, who, along with (reformist? GD) council leader Ted Knight, was a regular speaker at News Line’ (3) rallies.”

This is a lie. As I explain later, it was on precisely this issue that Assistant General Secretary Sheila Torrance. Political Committee member Dave Bruce and North London Central Committee (CC) member Richard Price opposed and voted against Healy on the CC. Healy’s counter-attack was led by Cliff Slaughter (4), who accused the oppositionists of scepticism!
Also in mid 1985 the local Government faction, including Kate Phelps from south London and Liz Leicester and I from Kilburn had an acrimonious confrontation with Alex Mitchell and Paul Feldman, News Line journalists, on the subject. Norman Harding, a veteran member from the fifties rebelled on this issue and was subjected to a severe attack from many party leaders. But he stuck to his guns. How could WRP leaders think to escape responsibility for this by claiming, farcically that it was Healy’s ‘personal relations separated entirely from the CC and the party’?

As a footnote to this subject, Livingstone claimed at an oration at Healy’s funeral that MIS took a deliberate decision to smash up the WRP in 1985 because of its relationship with left wing Labour Councils and the PLO. He says one his advisers had seen proof of infiltration of left wing meetings. He claims not to know the identity of the agent he says was in the top leadership of the WRP and will not reveal his source of information. The reply of Cliff Slaughter was to deny that any such infiltration and disruption took place, and the response of the IC was to suggest that the agent was probably Cliff Slaughter.

**Ridiculous Claim**

Both sides reject Livingstone’s ridiculous claim that the split was caused by a deliberate decision of the MI5 but Slaughter’s rejection of the idea that MI5 could have been involved in infiltrating the WRP is naive in the extreme. Why are they there, what do they spend all their money on if not exploiting situations like the split in the WRP to cause maximum confusion? Which side you thought any agents were on depended on where you stood in the split which was not a reliable guide to objectivity.

There is no attempt at objectivity in the obituary. No mention is made of the struggles of the Young Socialists and the Hyland group in the defeat of Healy. Where was any of the present leadership of the WRP when the parents of the sexually abused female comrades were being so severely pressurised by Mike Banda into withdrawing their charges against Healy? It must be said, without conceding any political ground to the Hylandites, that without their struggles (not North’s) Healy would not have been defeated at the time.

The obituary claims the fact that Healy was:

“Culturally backward was demonstrated by his general lack of education, the narrowness of his reading. ... This cultural backwardness were (sic) reflected in his uncouthness and constant resort to foul language and threats -and not only threats - of physical violence against party members. It undoubtedly contributed to his inability to tackle the movement’s theoretical and political problems”.

And of the intervention in the Communist party crisis of 1956:

“Here too he left the theoretical work to others, his organising ability greatly exceeding his theoretical contribution. ... Healy’s contribution was slight. ... However frequently and stridently he spoke of the need for theory he actually made little contribution to the theoretical work of the movement.”
It says he did not understand Permanent Revolution because he supported the pro-imperialist Massali Hadj during the Algerian war of the late fifties and he later supported Gadaffi.

All this rings of the sneers of puerile petty bourgeois academics at a self-educated man of humble Irish peasant origins who controlled their political lives for three decades. But the question that now poses itself point blank to any impartial reader of this piece is: what were the people who did understand Permanent Revolution and who had made theoretical contributions ‘still valid today’, as the obituarists claim (of themselves, no doubt), doing whilst all this was going on? And why did they kowtow to and put up with such an appalling human being as their leader?

As Marxists we must dismiss the theory of the ‘cult of the individual’ and proclaim that they followed him, beat people up for him (5), lied, cheated and defended political positions they knew to be wrong for him because he was the best representative of their own political and class positions, just as Stalin was the best representative of the bureaucracy. All other explanations are cover-ups to continue the same political positions. Stalinism survives without Stalin, Healyism survives without Healy. In fact the present WRP leader, academics Cliff Slaughter, Geoff Pilling, Tom Kemp and Durham miners’ leader Dave Temple, (and ex-WRP leader Cyril Smith) played no part in the struggle against Healy while he was still even partially in control and so a threat to them. Only Dot Gibson, very timidly, and Simon Pirani, and that very late in the day when there was little danger and a split was inevitable, made any attempt at opposition.

**Centrist Swamp**

The WRP is now a right-moving centrist swamp which has readopted most of its old right-wing opportunism in relation to the left trade union and labour leaders (Scargill etc.) and uses ultra-left sectarian bluster to cover the reversion to right-wing Stalinophobic positions approaching state capitalism in regard to the Soviet Union, East Germany, Namibia etc. and chauvinist positions in regard to the national liberation movement in Ireland. In fact the WRP has abandoned all pretence at anti-imperialism wherever it has forces on the ground. The bluster on Iraq was exposed by the letter from the leader of the WRP (Namibia), Harry Boesak in Workers Press of 22 September 1990, where he asks, in effect ‘How can you support Saddam Hussein against imperialism and not SWAPO?’ (See chapter 8). At least he sought a consistent (right-wing) position. Such honesty is beyond the WRP. Even on Iraq the WRP preferred the more accommodating ‘Defend Iraq’ and refused to adopt the Victory to Iraq’ position, thus avoiding the real anti-imperialist struggle.

The failure of the party to adopt a programme and detailed national and international perspectives in the period of its resurgence allowed ‘all the old crap’ and also the old and discredited leaders to re-emerge in the period of reaction that began at the end of 1986. If fact all the political issues that emerged at the time of the split with the WRP (News Line) and which leaders like Simon Pirani were so determined to correct are now the common
property of both WRP groups. However the split was not in vain. The lessons have to be learned by all those wanting to regenerate Trotskyism. The IC tradition represented a large part of the history of Trotskyist centrism. This balance sheet basically breaks down into the conflicts around a number of splits together with some other issues of importance.

Footnotes:

(1) International Committee of the Fourth international (ICFI or IC): The section of the 1953 split in the Fourth International which opposed Pablo’s liquidation into the Stalinist Parties. Its main components were the US SWP led by James Cannon, the French PCI/OCI (Parti /Organisation Communiste Internationaliste) led by Pierre Lambert and the British Healyites (the ‘Group’ later to become the SLL and then the WRP). It was never a real International, having a federalist rather than a democratic centralist structure and containing all the political problems of the ‘Pabloite’ section but in different forms. The majority was led by Michael Pablo and composed the vast majority of the national sections. In 1953 it was called the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, becoming the United Secretariat (USec or USFI) after the 1963 reunion with the US SWP.

(2) Gerry Healy: 1913-1989: Joined the CP in 1928 and the Trotskyist movement in 1937.11’ self proclaimed high priest of British Trotskyism from the late 1940s, his career consisted of factional manoeuvres and thuggery against opponents, distorting and misusing the great liberating ideas of Trotskyism to enslave his followers and build a huge bureaucratic apparatus owned and controlled by a few persona followers Was opposed to any close relations with the working class after the loss of his only substantial implantation in the workplaces in the 1974 split led by Alan Thornett. Me feared the would challenge his bureaucratic stranglehold on the party apparatus. An Irishman who was ashamed of Ireland he was eventually expelled from the WRP in October 1985 for repeated sexual abuse of female comrades, for physical violence again: party members and for slandering D North, leader of the U Workers League, as a CIA agent.

(3) News Line: (1976-): The daily paper of the WRP, successor of the daily Workers Press (1969-76). After the split in October 1985 two News Line appeared and the name was contested in court. Then the anti-Healy faction launched the new Workers Press on 21 December 1985 and the pro-Healy section produced a daily News Line in February 1986, which still continues. There were, in fact three WRP’s after the Hyland group split in February 1986 but they soon renamed themselves the International Communist party ICP.

(4) Cliff Slaughter: Bradford University lecturer in sociology, won from the CP b] Healy after the crisis of 1956. As Healy’s chief theoretician he participated in every split and frame-up there after Together wit’ Alex Mitchell, a former News Line editor and foreign editor’ a the time of the spilt was the chief proponent of the ‘Security and’ the Fourth International’ slander campaign against the US SWP. He has never fought the class struggle in his own union or college. Refused to oppose Healy until his defeat was inevitable in 1985.
(5) Beat people up for him: Among the numerous allegations of violence and intimidation from the past this account from the appeal of Brian Behan against expulsion in 1960 is apt:

“Four NC members, Healy, M Banda, Pennington and Slaughter, went to the Knights’ house at midnight and attempted to intimidate them. (Cde Slaughter was taken along because, in Cde Healy’s words, ‘It was important to commit people like Slaughter’.)”

SLL Internal Bulletin No..5 May 1960.

Later well known cases include the beating up of the US SWP supported Ernie Tate in the 1960s and the Thornett supporter Tony Richardson in 1974.

(6) Mike Banda: General Secretary of the WRP for over ten years until his expulsion in May 1986 for desertion six months earlier. Together with his brother, Tony, he came to Trotskyism in Ceylon soon after the war. Although he always maintained a token opposition to Healy’s worst excesses. e.g.; Algeria and Iraq, his own political leanings towards Stalinism went unchecked. Unable to face the enormity of what he had done in betraying Trotskyism and covering up for Healy for almost half a century he became a Stalinist in mid 1988.
Chapter 1: The Break-up

“The Devil can cite scriptures for his purpose. An evil soul, producing holy witness, Is like a villain with a smiling cheek; A goodly apple rotten at the heart 0, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!”

Shakespeare; Merchant of Venice, Act 1 Scene 3

Or how the ‘goodly apple rotten at the heart’ that was the WRP split asunder.

The Split with Gerry Healy and the WRP (News Line) in October 1985

The miners’ strike of 1984-85 had a profound effect on the WRP as it did on all left groups. A number of left groups like the Socialist League and the WRP underwent splits under pressure from that great social movement as there was practically a universal failure by the left to intervene effectively in the dispute. The Communist party too finally split. The perspectives of the self proclaimed revolutionary parties had been falsified by the real movement of the working class and long hidden opportunisms were exposed to the light of day by this high point of a ruling class offensive which was begun under Callaghan and intensified by Thatcher.

In particular the perspectives of the WRP were so far from reality that it resulted in a breakdown in the internal discipline and ideological cohesion of the party. All the most oppressed sections in the working class; the Miners’ Wives Support Groups, Women Against Pit Closures, lesbian and gay groups, the Black and Irish community identified the miners’ struggle against the state with their own struggles and began to make common cause. Left wing political activists within these layers fought with a good degree of success to turn them towards the working class and so outflanked their own conservative petty-bourgeois leaders. The sleepless activists of the WRP began to look up and to assert their own political opinions and to sleep a little more. The money from members pockets for unsold News Lines began to find other uses.

Together with this, the invasion of the Lebanon in 1982, the Iran-Iraq war and the general shift to the right of the Arab bourgeoisie resulted in the disappearance of that source of funding for the WRP. However it must be stressed in this regard that it was the political prostitution of Trotskyist principles that was the great crime committed in the relationship with the Arab bourgeoisie. Actual cash donations from this source were small (we may never know the exact amounts or what they were for), the bulk of the funds coming from publishing contracts from Arab governments and institutions, which were so lucra-
tive because of the eighteen hour days put in by the comrades in the print shop in Run-
corn.

The party was bankrupt financially and politically and all Healy’s grandiose plans were
in ruins. The vast majority of party funds had come from middle class and working class
members, who made the most enormous sacrifices for what they believed was the cause
of the socialist revolution. A revolutionary party would be entitled to demand such sacri-
fices, and will need to do so when the construction of a revolutionary party becomes a
possibility and an objective necessity with the approach of a revolutionary situation. That
the WRP was just about to lead this supposedly imminent revolution, or indeed would
ever be able to lead any revolution was what now being questioned.

On 1 July 19 Aileen Jennings (Healy’s long time personal secretary) sent a letter to the
Political Committee detailing Healy’s sexual abuse of 26 named women comrades over
the years. The truth of the allegation were admitted by Paddy O’Regan, Sheila Torrance’s
husband, in reply to a question from John Simmance at the lobby of the Central Commit-
tee by outraged members on 12 October 1985 in my hearing.

Simmance: “Are these things true?”
O’Regan: So what if they are, I’m still a Healyite.”

After the letter appeared, Jennings, fearing for her life, went into hiding and was never
seen in the WRP again. The top layers of the WRP resembled those of the Roman Empire
in its last days with constantly shifting alliances and coups being hatched to ensure the
survival of this or that individual or group of leaders.

Lunatic Perspectives

The increasingly lunatic perspectives of the WRP: the ever present revolutionary situ-
tion, the ever leftward movement of the working class, the imminent collapse of capital-
ism and the total disappearance of all attempts to forge a relationship with a constantly
changing class struggle revealed in the adoption of a permanent ‘General Strike’ slogan
were all a strategy to avoid any tactical intervention in the working class movement on
the basis of Trotskyist transitional demands. The “Thornett Clique”, as the mainly Oxford
based opposition of car workers and intellectuals was described, had been bureaucrati-
cally expelled in 1974 on precisely this issue. Any close relationship with the working
class on a Trotskyist programme was out of the question as this could have vindicated the
stand of Alan Thornett, the Cowley shop steward and leader of the WRP’s industrial
wing, the All Trades Union Alliance in 1974, and could have exposed the WRP leadership
to a similar opposition. Yet this was clearly what the miners’ strike demanded.

The instruction to withdraw support from the Miners Support Groups met much resis-
tance and the editorial on the Brighton bomb drew opposition from Manchester, Kilburn,
Leicester and highly successful March to Free the Jailed Miners”, which was organised by
the WRP in June 1985 and went from Scotland to London.
The News Line editorial on the IRA’s bombing of the Tory cabinet at the Grand Hotel in Brighton during their 1984 conference, subsequently reprinted in Labour Review, the WRP’s theoretical journal, condemned the bomb attempt as an “outrage” and suggested it was an attempt by some secret service operatives, in alliance with the IRA to precipitate a coup and thus rob the working class of a revolutionary victory the WRP was just about to lead!

The attempt to sabotage a meeting in Camden called by black community groups with NUM, Sinn Fein and PLO speakers, saying that this was an attempt by state agents to discredit the NUM by association with terrorists resulted in an attack on an east London Young Socialist disco by black youth. A number of WRP members, including Matt Hanlon from Willesden and I, were hospitalised after this attack. Healy asserted that these groups were led by police agents, naming in particular a well known east London family whose brother was killed in a police station.

There were hysterical assaults on Stuart Carter, a second generation Irish CC member from Manchester, at the Central Committee by Healy and WRP General Secretary Mike Banda (6) because he refused to support the attempt to break Torrance’s perceived power bid when she opined that perhaps Healy was wrong and the miners might be defeated. He had also opposed the chauvinist line on Ireland. The failure of any CC member to protest at this or the subsequent assaults on his supporters in Manchester, were symptomatic of a deeply corrupt organisation. Even the secret opposition ‘gang of five’ failed to make any protest. Some later argued that they could not show their hand too early. They were, in fact, adapting same method of manoeuvre and conspiracy that was the hallmark of the WRP leadership. That Thornett had rejected this method was his strength in 1974, not his weakness as some of the “gang of five’ claimed.

Gross opportunist Relationship

The London District Committee was the scene of a struggle on the question of the falsification of membership figures and other issues. There was a limited opposition also to the gross opportunist relationship of the WRP with Ken Livingston and Ted Knight. That opposition was led by Kate Phelps, from south London, and others, though with very confused politics

On the Central Committee only Richard Price, Dave Bruce and Sheila Torrance opposed the WRP’s line of uncritical support for Livingston and Knight. Norman Harding’s stand has been referred to in the introduction. He was called in for an interview which, according to Harding, culminated in Healy saying Livingstone was:

“a pendulum who has swung to the right but when he swings back again we’ll catch him”.

The attack on the CC opposition members was led by Healy’s ideological gun-for-hire, Leeds University lecturer Cliff Slaughter, who accused them of philosophical scepticism.
No criticism of Livingstone was allowed, even when he ratted on the rate-capping struggle to save his parliamentary career, as he openly admitted. No oppositionist appealed to the rank and file. As far as we knew the CC was united on the Livingstone affair.

**Gang of Five**

The “Gang of Five” who were based in the party’s Clapham HQ had plotted Healy’s downfall for two years. They had prepared a political and organisational offensive against him. They struck when the internal crisis was at its height in the immediate aftermath of the March to Free the Jailed Miners and presented the Jennings’ letter. Contrary to what David North, leader of the US Workers League, sympathising section of the ICFI, claims, Torrance had nothing to do with this decision.

The five thousand strong Alexander Palace Rally on 30 June that followed the March to Free the Jailed Miners showed that, despite its abstention from the Miners’ Support Groups and its lack of any programme, sections of the WRP had now established their closest relationship with the fighting vanguard of the working class since the early seventies, even if this was only a temporary and weak intersection. There were scores of miner’s and other trade union’s banners present. This brought the practice of a section of the party in intervening in the working class during the strike into violent conflict with its sectarian ideology.

Simon Pirani had led that march and the Trotskyist method of making demands on the right wing Labour leaders to expose their cowardice before the state was applied in defence of the jailed miners, in however limited and one sided a fashion (of course no demands were made on Scargill). That this was a one sided application is proved by the expulsion of the young YS comrade on Pirani’s report of his opposition to the party’s position on the Brighton bomb and Pirani’s failure to oppose the relationship with Knight, Livingstone and Scargill, whom we were forbidden to criticise since the Mansfield demonstration. However all opposition was partial and one-sided at that time and at least he fought the lunatic sectarian freaks around the Redgraves who were organically incapable of making any relationship with the working class.

A number of internal documents began to circulate in the months after the Jennings’ letter on the question of the united front. Dave Bruce opened up the discussion by producing one basically setting out the communist position as developed by Trotsky very much within the framework of the WRP’s perspectives but at the same time seriously challenging them.

Torrance replied with a document containing the usual assertion that this was a revolutionary situation and those who attempted to apply tactical orientation by transitional demands were petty bourgeois who did not understand Trotsky’s “Lessons of October” and sought to derail the party just as it was about to seize power (honestly), as Zinoviev and Kamenev had sought to do immediately before the October Revolution. She contin-
ued to totally misconstrue the “Lessons of October” (which seemed to be one of the few books on revolutionary tactics she had read) and implied that the German CP had missed their opportunity in 1923 because it relied too heavily on the United Front.

Pirani replied to this nonsense with a good document on the party’s ultimatum perspectives and questioning why on earth we had gone to Bournemouth to demonstrate against the Labour party on the instructions of the Political Committee when the Alexander Palace Rally had decided to lobby the Conference? To march around Bournemouth and not even go near the Conference was about as foolishly sectarian an exercise as we had ever attempted. Why not go to Scotland to demonstrate? This was but a blow in the increasingly heated internal conflict.

Alex McLarty, a Scottish member who joined in the fifties, produced another opposition document on the united front at the time, which read much better to many of us than Torrance’s. Dave Bruce wrote ‘A Charlatan is Exposed”, on Healy’s “Studies in Dialectical Materialism”, in July and August before the split. This exposed the fraud of Healy’s 1982 book on dialectics. I will assess this in chapter four. We never got to discuss any of these documents before the split.

Secret Meetings

By September the Jennings’ letter was known among a sizeable section of the membership. In Yorkshire a group had gathered around CC member and full time organiser Dave Hyland. They later came under the guidance of David North. This included Julie Hyland and Dolly Short, Young Socialist (YS) National Secretary and Editor respectively and the majority of the YS National Committee. Secret meetings were held in great fear and caution to which a west London group went at the end of September. The Yorkshire group believed that Healy would stop at nothing to crush the opposition and that they could be assassinated by PLO gunmen.

Dave Hyland at first refused to attend the Central Committee of 12 October as he feared for his life and had distributed statements to trade union branches in case he would not survive. Fantasy perhaps, but all leaders of the WRP had known of Healy’s violence against Tony Richardson, a Thornett supporter who had been in the WRP /SLL for some nine years, in the Clapham flats in 1974 and against Stuart Carter, in early 1985 and of many other acts of thuggery carried out by his ‘Security Department’. Fear was not a misplaced emotion. Political explanations were minimal from this group but this was the general run of things at the time.

Healy began a struggle to get rid of Sheila Torrance at the start of 1985 because of her opposition to the line on the miners’ strike and the party’s relationship with Knight and Livingstone. He formed an alliance with Banda to do this. On the appearance of the Jenning’s letter Torrance blocked with Healy. Her closest ally on the CC had been Peter Farrell, a Camden Council painter shop steward. He had entered one CC fully prepared
to physically defend Torrance against the expected assault from Healy and Banda. When Torrance so cynically changed horses in mid stream, presumably out of fear of losing her bureaucratic stranglehold on her membership, he left in disgust, refusing support to any faction in the split.

Mike Banda now tried to find a compromise formula to keep the party together and Healy’s crimes hidden. He held long, abusive meetings with the parents of Healy’s victims to pressurise them into withdrawing their demands for a Control Commission investigation into Healy’s conduct. The father of a young YS member who Healy had attempted to abuse, came into the centre and met Healy crossing the courtyard. He promptly landed a blow on his jaw which flattened him. Healy never appeared unguarded after that, having a round-the-clock guard on his flat lest the relatives of the abused girls would seek revenge. The forced letter from Healy admitting his crimes and promising:

‘In accordance with our agreement dated 5/7/85, I unreservedly undertake to cease immediately my personnel (sic) conduct with the youth.’

which was made so much about by Banda after the split was, in fact part of the unprincipled attempted cover-up agreement.

**Greatest Living Marxist**

Healy was to retire and a function would be held to ensure his place as the greatest living Marxist. Rumours later emerged that a number of attempts were made at this time to poison Healy to prevent the scandal breaking. WRP chief theoretician Cliff Slaughter agreed with the plan to retire Healy and hold the function, and he refused to oppose or expose Healy. He only jumped at the beginning of October when all was out in the open in most of the party. Banda then switched sides and the defeat of Healy was assured. It must be said that only the group around Dave Bruce and Robert Harris in the Centre and the Hyland group had really fought to defeat Healy and had rejected this rotten compromise at the time. The ‘Gang of Five’ bugged his office and flat and so were able to anticipate his every move. They even heard him speculating that he was being bugged!

The majority of party members in London knew little of the internal conflicts before the two London Area Aggregates in the middle of October. Aggregates throughout the country were fixed after the first Central Committee on 12 October when everything about the Jennings letter was at last discussed by the CC, three months after it appeared. For the first time in the WRP’s history a large group of members turned up to lobby this CC meeting which was forced to agree to allow two representatives of the membership (“the mob” as Torrance referred to us) plus the parents of the abused comrades observer status at the CC and at the following one a week later.

Now that the rank-and-file was involved, both sides attempted to manipulate the membership by increasing the factional heat in order to prevent any thoroughgoing reassess-
ment of the political causes of the split. Both Corin Redgrave’s: “We are neither for nor against corruption we are for revolution” and Cliff Slaughter’s; “This reveals an ideology near fascism” were designed to halt all discussion and prevent such reassessments. After all the entire leadership of the WRP (and the membership too, though obviously to a far lesser degree) were responsible for the crimes of the party and no leader wanted those issues examined too closely. I could not get very heatedly partisan about this at the time. After all we were all in the same party up until then, how did a section of the leadership become total monsters overnight and another section the continuators of the Trotskyist tradition?

At these meetings the selling of photographs of Iraqi oppositionist demonstrators to Saddam Hussein’s brutal regime was revealed. These could have been used to send oppositionists to their deaths. This was the most horrible of crime and one which has never been properly investigated. After the Iraqi TU leader who spoke at a conference of the All Trade Union Alliance (ATUA, the WRP’s fake industrial wing) was executed after returning home without a murmur from the WRP. Did, in fact, monetary transactions result in executions? The justification by the WRP of the executions of the Iraqi CP members by Saddam Hussein suggested that this would not have bothered the WRP leaders.

Apparently only Mike Banda opposed this line in the CC. Only Tony Short, a long standing member from Wembley, who had been in the CP made a real fuss about the issue at the time. Did the donations from other Arab leaders pay for similar favours? Norah Wilde, of the North London branch, raised the continuing cover-up of these affairs in a letter to the CC in February 1988 (almost two and a half years later!) when the factional ICFI document selectively exposing some of the transactions became public. She particularly objected to the Political Committee statement in Workers Press of 13-1-1988 which said:

‘We never objected to the fact that Healy dealt with Libya and other similar regimes nor that money was obtained from them in the course of such dealings.’

Wilde pointed out that the party membership had, in fact, very strongly objected to these dealings (at the October 1985 London aggregates GD). This revealed, perhaps more than any other issue, the almost total corruption of the party.

**Premature Split**

The proposal of David North to hold the party together for these discussions was correct. The issue was not simply the corrupt nature and unprincipled actions of the ‘Rump’ leadership (the court cases that Vanessa Redgrave initiated immediately, for instance), but to get a real evaluation of the political roots of the crisis in front of the entire membership. A premature split avoided this.

Subsequently events revealed that North, too, was unwilling to make a real evaluation of the past. He merely wished to hijack the party with his “record” of struggle against Healy
- one critique of his ‘Dialectics’ written in 1982 and hastily withdrawn when his allies, Banda and Slaughter ratted on him plus a few other critiques on Permanent Revolution which the membership, or indeed the CC’s in the US or Britain never saw before the split. North attempted to gain control of the anti-Healy section with the resolution which was passed at the Special Congress on 25 October that all party members be re-registered on the basis of subordination to the International Committee. His speech to that Congress got a standing ovation and although many of his opponents were later to emerge as Stalinists, people soon began to question his claims to revolutionary purity while he had acted as the leader of what was in reality the US branch of the WRP.

It was at this Congress that I made my first intervention in the crisis. I opposed the notion of the party being revolutionary, despite Healy, and demanded the removal of the cowardly section from the back of the membership cards that said:

“The Workers Revolutionary party opposes individual terrorism as a form of protest which isolates those concerned from the mass of the working class organised in trade unions and political parties of the working class”.

The speech was well received, the first time I felt I had anything important to contribute to the struggle for revolutionary political leadership. Torrance’s assertion that the “sex thing” was being used to move the party right-ward was obviously believed by many members, who were required to make up their minds on whose side they were on in the midst of very highly charged emotional appeals and very little political debate. The side many took was decided by accident, where they lived and who their friends were rather than any political assessment. The reference to a homosexual being a security risk in Aileen Jenning’s letter was symptomatic of the WRP’s appalling backwardness on the question of special oppression. This was also highlighted by the quotation from Lenin’s conversation with Clara Zetkin that Slaughter used during that first London Aggregate:

“But would a normal person normally lie down in the gutter and drink from a puddle? Or even from a glass whose edge has been greased by many lips?”

Torrance shouted that this was bourgeois ideology but was devastated by the revelation that it was a quote from Lenin in reply to Clara Zetkin. In 1920 Nonetheless, bourgeois ideology it was, it did suggest that a sexually active woman was a filthy thing, whilst the male was free to engage in sex whenever and Clara Zetkin strongly disagreed with Lenin on this question.

The total lack of understanding of sexual oppression on all sides in the WRP and its traditional hostility to questions of sexual liberation meant that this could not provide a clear political basis for a struggle or a split. In fact Healy’s views on these issues, shared by many WRP leaders, were to the right of the liberal section of the Tory party!

**Healy Supporters**

The Healy supporters under the leadership of Assistant General Secretary Sheila Torrance
and Corin and Vanessa Redgrave refused to come to the Special Congress on 25 October, citing fear of physical violence. In reality they knew they were in the minority and so held their own Congress, declaring themselves the true WRP. Of the International Committee, the small Spanish section and the rather larger Greek section supported Healy. Savas Michael, the leader of the Greek section, was to become the new Secretary of the Healy IC. Vanessa Redgrave then launched a series of legal actions claiming right to WRP property which was designed to bankrupt the Banda-Slaughter faction.

The political basis of this group was a refusal to re-examine the past, objectivism, sectarian dogmatism as developed by Healy and a capitulation to Stalinism. The crisis of Healyism continued to dog the Healy side of the split. Healy began to pronounce that Gorbachev was now ‘objectively’ leading the political revolution in the USSR. Their Greek co-thinkers formed electoral alliances with the Stalinists. Torrance refused to move against Healy politically, relying instead on manoeuvres which did nothing to clarify what the political differences were. The climax was to come at the bizarre meeting of the ‘ICFI’ in Greece on 14 March 1987. The two WRP delegates, Ben Rudder and Sheila Torrance arrived to find two delegates representing the WRP, Gerry Healy and Vanessa Redgrave, already present and were accused of national Trotskyism by Michael for daring to elect their own delegates!

Following the split the Healy /Redgrave faction was to form the Marxist party and continue with yet another ICFI, consisting of themselves, the Spanish and Greek sections. In the Torrance led WRP a new split developed. This was led by Richard Price and was later to become the Workers International League (WIL). The initial difference centred around Torrance’s refusal to politically confront Healy’s pro-Stalinism (unlike Banda he never actually became a Stalinist). This group did not begin to make any big political developments until forced to do so by the factional dishonesty of the North supporters, by then split off from the Slaughter led WRP, in ripping off some of their members instead of re-examining the history of the crisis of Trotskyism. In their later reply to North’s ‘The Heritage We Defend’ (a response to Mike Banda’s ‘27 Reasons’) the most serious and best attempt of any of the WRP splinters was made to re-assess this history, in particular the fraud of the IC tradition and the win now acknowledge that they were on the wrong side of the 1985 split.

Appendix 1

Aileen Jennings’ letter to the Political Committee

Dear Comrades.

During the course of action on the Manchester Area certain practices have come to light as to the running of Youth Training by a homosexual and the dangers this holds for the party in relation to police provocations. I believe the Political Committee was correct in
stating that a cover-up of such practices endangered the party from a serious provocation.

Having realised this I must therefore say to the Committee that I can no longer go on covering up a position at both the office and the flats at 155 Clapham High Street which also opens the party to police provocation: namely that whilst for 19 years I have been the close personal companion of Comrade Healy I have also covered up a problem which the Political Committee must now deal with because I cannot.

This is that the flats in particular are used in a completely opportunist way for sexual liaisons with female members employed by the party on News Line, female members of the International Committee and others [26 individuals were then named].

On any security basis one of these or more has to be the basis of either blackmail by the police or an actual leak in security to a police-woman. I am asking the Political Committee to take steps to resolve the position the party in the present political situation.

In 1964, after the ... Control Commission of Investigation Comrade Healy gave an undertaking he would cease these practices. this has not happened and I cannot sit on this volcano any longer.


Appendix 2

These are the two statements of aims that appeared on the backs of WRP membership cards. The old version appeared for the last time on the 1978-79 card. The new version signified the right turn of the WRP and was a reaction to the Observer libel case of 1978, where WRP leaders, including Healy and the Redgraves, declared that they opposed all violence and would only use legal means to achieve their aims. Fear of state repression and desire to develop relationships with the left Labour reformists were the motives. Healy later claimed that they all faced long prison sentences in a subsequent prosecution if this undertaking was not given.

Old Version

The aim of the party is to prepare and mobilise the working class for the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of working class power and the building of a socialist society.

The party bases its policies on the theory of Marxism as developed by Lenin and Trotsky, the decisions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International and the Founding programme of the Fourth International (1938). This party is the British Section of the Fourth International affiliated to the International Committee and fighting to build the Fourth International.
New Version

The aim of the Workers Revolutionary party, which is based on Marxism, is to prepare the working class for the replacement of capitalism by a socialist society.

To achieve this aim the Workers Revolutionary party will use all legal means at its disposal such as the existing electoral facilities.

The Workers Revolutionary party opposes individual terrorism as a form of protest which isolates those concerned from the mass of the working class organised in the trade unions and the political parties of the working class.

The Workers Revolutionary party is the British Section of the Fourth International affiliated to the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Appendix 3


I gave the following Report of the Control Commission to the Special Conference of the Workers Revolutionary Party on 26 and 27 October 1985.

THE REPORT

We have to start by saying that we were appalled at the way Comrades were pressurised into withholding their claims for the Control Commission to investigate their grievances. It is the right of every member to be able to approach their Control Commission without the interference of committees or leading members.

While we were involved mainly in investigating the contents of the letter of Comrade Aileen Jennings dated 30 June 1985, it has become very obvious that the Commission will have to investigate further because of the introduction of other aspects and complaints.

What follows will be an example of the way Healy either broke down the will to resist his advances or was able to keep the comrades under his domination. One Comrade who was a member of the International Committee gave in her written statement a vivid example of how he operated.

‘In the middle of 1975 I explained to GH that I wished to finish the personal relationship. According to his reaction he was obviously prepared for this. He feigned to be offended; Of course I am old, of course I am not young any more. But don’t you see it is a political relationship. He ended up by stating, if you finish the personal relationship you finish the political one.

‘I found myself in a difficult situation. I had the responsibility for my section and could not light-minded break the political relations towards one of the most important leaders or even make him my enemy without thinking exactly about it.
At the end of 1975 I explained again that I wanted to finish my personal relationship. He grumbled and said: "It is a privilege to speak with me; others may not see me at all. Why do you say it is a personal relationship? It is a political relationship. If you cut off the personal relation I cut off the political relation."

Confronted with my responsibility for the section and the fact that GH was the most important contact to the International Committee, that I felt myself completely isolated in the IC and had no real political contact with anybody, I did not see myself going into a confrontation with GH.

After my marriage the relationship with GH became a burden to me. Each time I went to the IC I thought if he goes to bed with me I do not go to England any more. When I was called to GH I stared at him full of hatred. He complained about this: "She wants out but I do not let her out, I do not know who she is, CIA or I anything. If something comes out here I will deny everything."

After he had accused me of being CIA he opened his pants to undress and said lowly: "I don’t care I rape her." My reaction was: "Please, if you imagine this is it, you can take my body but you will never own me," and I looked to the side.

The affairs with GH led to a psychological instability as early as 1975 and to depressions till I arrived at the conclusion to look for a friend. When I had a kidney operation in 1976 this was connected with my psychological instability so I had to take treatment. It was a connection of political pressure and the burdening personal relationship from which I could not free myself.

The following is an extract from a statement made by a youth comrade.

I was regularly called in for discussions with GH in his office and at his flat. Approximately one month after I had started work at the Centre while in one of these "discussions" at the flat he cuddled and kissed me as I was leaving. I thought that this was very strange behaviour and pulled away. He immediately became angry and said: "What’s wrong am I a leper or something?" Because I didn’t understand what was happening, and after all he was the leader of the party, I ignored it although it worried me.

The next evening when I was again called in for a discussion, he told me to sit on the bed, which I did. He started telling me that he had a "political relationship" with me and that he would "train" me. He said that he had been watching me for some time and could train me to be a revolutionary leader. I was grateful that he was paying so much attention to me. He then came and sat down beside me on the bed and started patting my knee and kissing me. I pulled away again, this time in tears. He again got angry and said: "You think I am an animal, you’re just an idealist who does not want to be trained". I couldn’t stop crying so he sent me out of the room.

Within minutes this comrade had gone from one who could be trained as a revolutionary leader, to one who was an idealist who didn’t want to be trained. The only thing that had happened in those few minutes was that she had rejected GH’s advances.
‘The following day he kept calling me into the office saying: "I don’t know if you can be trained; I’m not satisfied with your development, we may have to send you home."

‘That night I was called into the flats again. I was terrified. This time he told me to take my clothes off. I thought he was joking and just laughed. But he started shouting: "What’s so funny?" And he sent me packing out of the flats. The next day continued as the day before with me being called into the office and shouted at. He said [other comrades] would be very disappointed with my "opportunism". He then told me that he wanted me to come to the flats that afternoon.

‘He said that I had to tell no one where I was going and was to tell the guard at the gate that I was going shopping. This time I was so terrified that I asked another comrade to come with me. She asked me why and I told her what he had been doing to me. We went to the flats, he opened the door for us but when he saw the other comrade with me he shouted: "What do you think I am – a dirty old man?" He then had a brief discussion with us and sent us back to work.

‘That night he called me into his flat again. He was undressed wearing just a dressing gown, which was open. He told me to sit on the bed again which I did. He then started to tell me that I was an opportunist because I expected to be trained without going through the training. He said that I showed real idealism and backwardness and wasn’t sure if he could continue training me. He said that I only thought of superficial considerations, young boyfriends and not the politics of the man. He said that I was an individualist and told me that to be trained I had to subordinate myself to the leadership of the party and he was the party. He kept stressing this point of subordination. [. . . ]

‘He then became very angry and said if I told anyone about this he would denounce me as a police provocateur and have me thrown out of the party. He said that if I refused to subordinate myself I would be expelled for backwardness. He said: "Do not try to raise this on the Political Committee, because I am the Political Committee and they won’t believe you."

‘By this time I was in a complete state. I did not want to go through with it. I knew that he was capable of having me thrown out and that would not only have meant breaking with the party, but with [friends] as well. I knew that if I left the Centre he would say that I was backward and in retreat. [. . . ]

I was still crying when he told me to take off my clothes. I eventually did this.’

So here was a position where subordination to the party was reduced to subordination to him. If she refused, she be sent home, sacked or expelled as backward or in political retreat. She was in this state of mind when he told her to take her clothes off and she submitted to him. It is at this point that what can only be described as rape took place. There are many other examples of a similar nature described by other comrades.

The following is an example of how terrified Healy was of being exposed, and how he had to break up any relationships his victims were having. Six months after one female
comrade started working at the Centre GH found out that she was still in touch with a boyfriend. He went mad, and said that this was proof that she was un-trainable. She was sent home for two weeks. [. . .] She was told that she had flouted party discipline and that she had to go before the Party Congress to apologise for being un-trainable.

We will try now to give a picture of the conditions that those who worked closest to Healy had to work under.

The special International Committee school of 1980 was closed down because GH sat down on a toilet seat that had just been cleaned and was damp. The comrade responsible for the school was charged with not providing the proper conditions for the school to operate. Comrades had travelled from all over the world for this meeting, which would have cost many thousands of pounds to organise. Some comrades, particularly from South America, would have travelled at significant personal risk to themselves.

During the three—month cadre school the comrade in charge of the school advised one of the girl students to go for a pregnancy test as she was concerned about her condition. The comrade in charge of the school was then charged with lowering the moral standing of the school and destroying three months of political work.

Another example was when the manager of the school was called down to Healy’s bedroom where he complained that the sheets were damp. He left in the middle of the night to go back to London. The next day the two comrades were summoned to London to attend the Political Committee and were charged with trying to kill him — such as catching a cold, etc. The Commission was also told that during a row with a leading female comrade he C proceeded to hit and kick her continuously and finished by throwing her against a wall.

Then in 1979, following a PC meeting, the same comrade was sweeping up a broken glass that GH had broken while in a rage. He grabbed the broom from her and began to smash the windows. She tried to stop him; he then proceeded to attack her with the broom and struck her across the hip and back. This blow caused her permanent injury. She has one shoulder two inches lower than the other, and the whole of that side of her body is damaged in some way or another.

This continuous physical and sexual abuse of comrades; the knowledge that many more young female comrades, not only in the British section, but also from the other international sections [were in danger], also the added knowledge that after the ‘Release the Jailed Miners March’, due to end on 30 June, another layer of young comrades would be taken to the school and exposed to his domination: Aileen felt at this point that she had to send in her letter.

Throughout this physical and sexual abuse the comrade stayed at her post in spite of her injuries. At one point she went into hospital for an operation, and her doctor told her that this was as a result of injuries to her back. So great was her loyalty to the party that she never told anyone the truth of how the injuries had been sustained. She said it had hap-
pened when she turned round in the car to lift a heavy package off the back seat.

Compare this loyalty to the accusations made against her after she had left the letter and ‘disappeared’. That is, to accuse her of going off with the party funds and of being a police agent. In fact, all the other female comrades who were victims showed just this kind of loyalty to the party and their determination to fight for the revolution and stay within our party. They never told anyone of their personal experiences with Healy. They did not go to their parents; they did not go to the bourgeois courts which would have opened up the party to enormous provocations.

On two occasions Healy told two of the girls not to go with black men as black men carried diseases. This can only be described as a racist remark and not the remark of a communist.

We have met for the last eight days. We have interviewed nine comrades who appeared on the original list. Seven say that the accusations are true. One said that it was true but nothing happened to her. The other said that advances were made on many occasions but she always managed to put him off. There was also another statement saying it was true from a comrade who was not on the list and was from another section of the International.

The evidence gathered from those on the list as well as from many older comrades who have been in the party a long time made it obvious that stretching over the last 25 years or so, many more comrades had been subjected to this abuse. Further investigations will be necessary.

We must stress that the party owes a great debt to Comrade AJ and all [those] who have come forward to expose this degeneration and corruption which has dominated this party for so long. Their loyalty to the party gives great confidence that we will build the British section of the Fourth International.

Although the investigation is going to continue, we already have enough evidence of the anti-communist activities of Gerry Healy, involving the grave abuse of his authority and position in the movement, to say that the decision of the Central Committee on 19 October 1985 to expel Gerry Healy was correct.

That is the end of the report.

Norman Harding
Larry Kavanagh

The front page of the News Line on the next Monday carried the news of Gerry Healy’s expulsion from the WRP.
Chapter 2: The Implosion Continues

The Walrus and the Carpenter were walking close at hand;  
They wept like anything to see such quantities Of sand:
‘If this were only cleared away,’ they said, ‘it would be grand’
‘If seven maids with seven mops swept it for half a year, Do you suppose’, the Walrus said, ‘That they could get it clear?’ ‘I doubt it’ said the Carpenter, And shed a bitter tear,
Lewis Carroll, Alice Through the Looking Glass.

Or how the leaders of the old ICFI, North and Banda, and later Banda and Slaughter sought, and failed, to escape the legacy of Healy.

The Split with the ICFI and the IC in February 1986

After the initial, short lived alliance of North and Banda, the political nature of the split was further mystified by the Slaughter/Banda “communist morality” campaign with the result that it was not until the Spring of 1986 and the departure of the Banda group that any real political accounting began. By this time many of the best party militants had left, demoralised, though also during this period there was an influx of ex-members often without any political clarity though inspired by the removal of Healy. By this time too the North/Hyland group were gone, again without any real political discussion and without the necessary lessons being learned. The majority of the youth went with them and attempts to re-generate Trotskyism against the old leaders were now going to be very difficult without these. It was at this time that the haemorrhage of party members started with active membership declining from some 500 pre-split to the present figure of less than 70 in the WRP (Workers Press), (approximately 200 in all the splinters) in under two years.

The claims of the Hylandites that the Slaughter/Banda alliance was a rotten block against them are proved by the letter Slaughter wrote to Tony Banda proposing to abstain from criticism of Banda until the Hyland group were gone. The political struggle with the Hyland/North group was very much along the lines of accusation and counter-accusation with the political enmity between North and Slaughter/Banda obscuring the issues. Slaughter had been sent to the US WL Conference in 1985 by Healy to do a ‘job’ on North and he duly produced a report setting North up on a number of trumped-up charges although the one that he had capitulated to US chauvinism in not calling for the defeat of US imperialism during the invasion of Grenada seems to have some substance in the light of the later pacifist positions during the Gulf War.

Following the split with Healy the remaining sections of the ICFI, the sections in the USA, Australia, Germany, Sri Lanka, Peru and Uruguay supported North as he had gone around the sections before the split and they were more willing to accept a new guru in place of the old without the experience of the explosion in the WRP. The Peruvians subsequently abandoned North and, after an uneasy alliance with Slaughter, have retreated into national isolation. Oscar Poma, of the Peruvian section had produced a critical ac-
count of the history of the IC tradition in the first issue of ‘Tasks of the Fourth International’ in mid 1986. But the experience of the IC connection led them to draw negative conclusions about the need for an international struggle. The Belfast based Irish Socialist League supported the anti-Healy camp in the beginning but departed with Banda and subsequently disintegrated.

**Suspended**

When the report was produced by the International Committee detailing the WRP’s crimes Slaughter was able to say “were you not almost as bad as me?” and point to the fact that at the meeting on 16 December 1985 that suspended the WRP from membership of the International Committee the Australian section, the SLL, had voted for the suspension while North and Beams, the SLL leader, knew that they had also committed the same crimes, Nick Beams had received 15,000 Australian dollars from Gadaffi in return for his support and perhaps other favours. This suspension was forced through without written charges and without giving the WRP membership any chance to benefit from the new leadership which the ICFI was now promising to give. In fact it was a stratagem to avoid critical assessment of their own role in the debacle. North and co. had no stomach for going through the kind of public examination that the old leadership of the WRP were now subjected to.

Indeed how foolish it was to expect the leaders of the WRP and the International Committee to investigate their own past betrayals impartially and come up with an historical accounting and to begin to regenerate Trotskyism. This required a new leadership who had no historical axes to grind and no past crimes to sanitise. Despite what I still regard as genuine attempts on the part of some leaders they failed in this and the new leaders were politically unable to deal with the situation.

Slaughter was able to contrast his own position of taking some responsibility for the past, as he did at the public meeting on 26 November, with the very dishonest position of the IC majority which did not wish to appropriate any blame to themselves or re-assess their own contribution to the degeneration. Nevertheless the North/Hyland group tended to be to the left, in an ultra-left, sectarian sense, in that period on the issues of programme and perspectives while some of the followers of Banda were more and more developing as right wing anti-Trotskyists.

The unprincipled compromise with this perhaps inevitable development resulted in the political destruction of many good comrades. In particular many political positions taken by those who later opposed Banda were decidedly right wing and this leads me to conclude that Trotskyist positions and categories were simply weapons for Slaughter and his allies to be abused and utilised to batter opponents into submission in the struggle for control of the party apparatus. The Banda followers were right on that score. It was for this reason that Dave Bruce fought so hard to expose the Stalinism of Banda and to keep the youth in the party.

However the Minority were determined to split, on North’s instructions, and every effort
by members to defend them or develop discussions was rejected with contempt. Much to Slaughter’s disgust the London District Conference in January defended the right of the YS (who were almost all Hyland supporters) to publish their paper. This was on a motion from the Kilburn branch and another from Phil Penn, who had been Healy’s driver. The Runcorn Occupation Committee, supporters of Banda, had prevented distribution of the YS paper because they disagreed, from the right, with the content of the editorial which defended the Libyan regime against imperialism. All this support was rejected by Hyland’s followers with scorn.

The hysteria around the split was contrived on both sides. The secret split document was sent to the editorial office in Clapham on computer from the US Workers League and the Hylandites were discovered taking it. There was a huge reaction to the clearing out of the YS bank account by the Minority but the accusations of theft were unfounded as the YS was surely entitled to its own funds. No one to my knowledge called the police to the conference in February, as the North/Hyland group claim.

Indeed it is difficult to see how their hysterical behaviour outside the conference would not attract the attention of the police or how rational discussion was then possible, such was the hysteria within the group. They were well aware of this, having already booked an alternative venue for their own conference. Nevertheless the demand that they sign undertakings before entering the Congress and the arbitrary nature of the exclusion smacked so badly of the old methods that many non-supporters left in disgust.

This group, now called the International Communist party (ICP), is a very sectarian outfit, with no attempt to do anything other than hector the working class from the sidelines and denounce their reactionary leaders without ever attempting to engage them in practice with transitional demands and patient struggle and in that aspect is reverting more end more to the old WRP methods. It has its own International Committee with tiny sections in Germany, Sri Lanka, Uruguay and larger groups in Australia and the US.

**The Battle for Trotskyism**

A few other aspects of the break-up need clarifying. My own reaction to the split was to immediately seek out the Socialist Group, the descendants of the 1974 split and to obtain a copy of Alan Thornett’s ‘The Battle for Trotskyism’

A re-examination of the 1974 period would inevitable put North’s position under the microscope and question his own emergence in Healy’s coup against Wohlforth. Healy had ousted Wohlforth in a fake crisis over his supposed complicity in covering up for his companion’s (Nancy Fields) family ties to an ex-CIA operative. Having smeared Wohlforth as a CIA agent so he could rid himself of a man who had made a real independent contribution to Marxism during the Cuba crisis of the early 60s, so undermining Healy’s
supposed position as the greatest living Marxist. Although Wohlforth was no fighter and quickly withdrew his ‘Theory of Structural Assimilation’ when pressured by Healy in 1962, nevertheless Healy required an even more supine acolyte, David North.

Also to question the state agent accusations (ironically now used against North himself) used to depose Wohlforth would tend to question the whole ‘Security and the Fourth International’ investigation which was practically the only international struggle carried out by the IC since 1974. The pernicious nature of this inquiry, which was used to slander ever growing numbers of political opponents, particularly Joseph Hansen and George Novak of the US SWP as CIA/KGB agents obscured the fact that both groups were now taking almost exactly the same position of abandonment of Permanent Revolution, particularly in regard to the Middle East

**GPU/KGB**

It was wrong of the WRP to abandon this without any re-assessment. Certainly it had proved that Silvia Franklin was a CPU/KGB agent in the Trotskyist movement. She had worked as a secretary in the office James Cannon, leader of the US Trotskyist party the Socialist Workers party (SWP) for many years after the War. Mark Zborowski, who was responsible for the murder of Trotsky’s son Leon Sedov and lived in San Francisco until his death in July 1990 was also proved to be a GPU/KGB agent. They were both defended by the SWP as recently as 1989.

All the other sinister conclusions drawn from the mass of evidence uncovered could be equally interpreted as the process of capitulation to Stalinism and imperialism by the US SWP. The fact that the SWP is now so degenerate could have been politically explained by means of the details uncovered, but a world of intrigue was substituted for Trotskyism. No other Trotskyist group or serious historian would even listen to such slanders.

Interestingly, because North needed to prove that the history of Trotskyism in the US represented continuity, he had to abandon the case against George Novak, without explanation, as Novak had supposedly written some valuable contributions on dialectics for the SWP after the War.

North, of course, could not abandon this issue as easily as the WRP as he was then involved in the hugely expensive law suit he had brought against the SWP, in conjunction with Mark Gelfand, a Californian lawyer. The loss of this could have resulted in punitive damages of over a million dollars, which would spell the end of North’s career. This law suit implored one section of the state to act against another section and remove the leaders of the SWP, whom North claimed were state agents and restore Gelfand to membership. Some revolutionary perspective!

It was the struggle of Pirani, particularly the ‘Open letter to the ICFI’ of 12 February pledging the most thorough re-working of the history of the Trotskyist movement since the war that decided the issue for many members. The failure to reply to North’s ‘re-working’ shows how those pledges were later betrayed. An interesting aside to all this is
the manner in which the WRP repudiated the authority of the IC and David North. In an internal Newssheet called ‘News Line No. 1’, dated 31 December, Simon Pirani wrote a letter to members denouncing the arbitrary way the WRP was suspended from the IC without written charges or a chance of a hearing and he attached the protocols of the IC from 1958 and 1966. These proved that the IC was never a democratic centralist organisation and on the basis of these unprincipled compromises between Cannon, Healy and Lambert the authority of the IC was repudiated. Bill Hunter was foremost in refuting the bogus Democratic Centralism of North, (though that of the LIT was later to prove very attractive to him). North was nonplussed and could not reply to this shot.

The split with Mike Banda’s followers in the Summer of 1986

On 26 November the WRP had held a public meeting at which Cliff Slaughter had pledged to bring the struggle within the WRP into the open and to debate politically with all comers. Though the handshake with Communist party member Monty Johnston drew howls of outrage from the Minority such was the distrust of the old leaders that no other course was open. How those discussions were sabotaged is the content of the next section, but it is now clear that they were only a pragmatic response to the crisis in the party, a method of riding the storm.

Mike Banda was packed off to Sri Lanka as an embarrassment. He had been deeply disturbed by the explosion. His main public regret was the relationship of the IC with Massali Hadj, an Algerian resistance leader who became an agent for French Imperialism. The CC had instructed him to write a document supporting this renegade and he had done so. He also acknowledged that he should apologise to Tony Richardson for the beating he was given on Healy’s instructions, but never got around to this, as far as I know. Pilling was Banda’s main supporter at the time, insisting at the meetings in Banda’s house after the split that historical questions should not be raised with him, what mattered was what he was going to do now.

Discussions opened up with all and sundry. Political issues did emerge but these were all in the form of individual opinions and ideas that people aired to see how they would run. For instance it became quite a thing to reassess the historical contribution of Healy. Tom Kemp commented on an article by Healy’s ingratiating himself with Bevanite reformism during the “Group’ period of entryism that was simply disgusting in its capitulation to Bevan.

He noted:

“Every word that Trotsky wrote about centrists like the Independent Labour party (ILP) stands in total contrast to Healy’s approach to Bevan, just as his relationship with Bevan parallels that, more recently, with Livingstone and Co” and quoting Healy’s article from 1952: “Mr Bevan and his associates should be given the chance to lead the Labour party and its next cabinet so they can carry through as far and as fast as they can his experiment in dynamic parliamentarianism”.
Neither North nor Torrance will care to remember this and nor will the present leaders of the WRP (Workers Press). Tom Kemp has forgotten he was ever moved to pen these lines and nothing was done about this analysis. This period and record was afterwards defended by Dot Gibson and others at the Duke of York lectures at the end of 1986.

Kemp’s analysis contains its own confusion. Bevan, Livingstone and Co. never based any of their political programme, even formally, on revolution. They were not centrists at all, merely left reformists. This fact only makes the contrast between Trotsky’s advice and Healy’s practice even more acute.

**The Banda Group Rejects Trotskyism**

A group from Birkenhead and those around the Bandas and the Runcorn print shop were obviously so damaged by the regime and the explosion that they could no longer contemplate politics. Only subjective bile motivated many of them. They developed a theory about the rule of Healy’s apparatus having to be smashed up. This may well have reflected an opposition to the bureaucratic clique around Dot Gibson but they had no politics to fight it and many began to assert that they really wanted to smash the party up and considered they should be allowed in to do so. A great hullabaloo was raised about communist morality and communist relations but these principles applied only to the relationship of the leading faction to them and they did not think the Hylandites merited any such relations.

Before the departure of the Hyland/North group it was clear that a further split was emerging. A section of the Banda group around Dave Good and Mick Bishop, from the West Country, were pushing for bureaucratic expulsion of the Minority and this suited Slaughter. Mick Bishop had led the rejection of North’s ‘re-registration under the control of the IC’ motion by tearing up his form. Also a group of comrades like Martin Beverage and Robert Harris from London, were close to them but much more left-wing in many ways. They left basically in defence of the democratic rights of the first group, not an issue that ever really caught on in the WRP. Many of this faction joined the CP or became fellow travellers.

The most wide ranging document ‘27 Reasons Why the IC Should be Buried Forthwith and the Fourth International Rebuilt’ was written by Mike Banda himself and appeared around the end of 1985. Banda examined many aspects of the history of the Fourth International and drew the conclusion that all was betrayal, whilst still proclaiming himself to be a Trotskyist. Because this orientation was clear from a first reading of the document, the real political questions and incidents now raised by him were ignored and it was deemed sufficient to denounce some of the wrong political assessments and his general method in order to bury all the questions raised. In particular the WRP leaders did not assess his debunking of the Second Congress of the FI in 1948 as well as the Third in 1951. They ignored Banda’s exposure of the fraud of the 1953 ‘Open Letter’ from Cannon proclaiming the split with Pablo with no discussion or explanation of why the new IC had supported all his political positions up to then and in reality continued to support most of
his political positions in a different form.

This one sided response to Banda’s document had a disastrous effect on the party. Only two written responses were attempted by WRP leaders at the time. The document written by Dave Bruce, ‘27 Reasons and No Explanations’ was the only serious attempt. He attacked the anti-Marxist dishonesty of Banda, who only took a one sided, pessimistic view of Trotskyism to prove that all was betrayal. Bruce also attacked his reactionary positions on the Thornett split of 1974 and his silence on Ireland, Stalinism and social democracy. However on the issue of the IC tradition and the vital question of split of 1953 he did not answer. Significantly the WRP did not publish Bruce’s reply until March 1987. In the same issue of the Tasks of the Fourth International these questions were well tackled by Oscar Poma of the Peruvian section but reaction was now well under way and the article received no attention from WRP leaders, despite the promised reply. In any case this magazine took so long to produce (some six months) that when it was it represented a totally different era in the WRP.

**Historical Importance**

As practically every issue of historical importance was raised by Banda’s document it was the most important one to be answered that was produced during the whole period since the split. Slaughter did not attempt an answer and the other academics, Pilling, Smith and Kemp stayed silent, taking their cue from the leader as ever.

Bill Hunter’s reply was quite simply a disgrace. He was almost the only one who felt he had nothing to learn from the split, and he learned nothing. He skated over all the issues with customary half excuses. The one issue he did deal with in detail was the Minneapolis Trial and he here denied that Cannon’s refusal to advocate revolutionary defeatism against Hitler constituted an abandonment of Trotskyist principles. He afterwards explained in a discussion with Workers Power, even if it did abandon principles he had to do it to protect his organisation and the “Northwest Organiser”. This was the mass circulation trade union paper produced by the local Teamster’s branch under Trotskyist leadership. It was the centre of the political influence of the SWP over the unions like the Teamsters, which they had helped to found. The rest of his points were along the lines “were we not brave men who fought hard, how you dare criticise us?” In fact the main thrust of the response from the WRP leadership was to denounce the method of the document. This was, of course, of prime importance but it was used to bury the very important question of the historical content, which the leadership of Slaughter, Pilling, Smith, Kemp and Gibson were as unable then as now to tackle.

Hunter’s goal was educational, he thought, and he lacked even the most elementary sense of irony. His next attempt at an estimation of Mike Banda came when Banda had followed the logic of his previous drift and denounced Trotskyism. He called it “Mike Banda, A Man in Search of a Master”. Just a few months later as we shall see, Hunter was pumping out the most sycophantic adulation of Morenoism and attempting to expel all those who asked questions about Moreno’s history and politics. It was more a case of
How was it possible for Dave Good, the joint editor of the Workers Press to produce that provocative issue with Mike Banda’s ‘27 Reasons’ Just before the split with the North/Hyland group without Pirani or anyone else suspecting anything? This was a crucial provocation in hastening that split and served to prove that this was now the party position, particularly as Mike Banda’s article appeared under the logo ‘General Secretary of the WRP’. Good also produced the next issue to prove that no mistake had been made.

The unprincipled nature of the split with the IC was spelled out by a letter to the WRP CC from Phil Sandford of the Communist League of Australia:

“In this context we must examine the actions of the WRP leadership on the eve of the WRP congress. The publication of the Workers Press on the Friday and the withdrawal of minority rights to the Hyland group were a stab in the back to the struggle we had waged.

We know that North had already issued his split statement and that he and Beams would seize on any pretext to expel the WRP. But the fact remains there was a struggle being waged against them, a struggle that was virtually brought to an end by the pre-conference moves. To have brought the Hyland group before the conference to answer for their actions over the YS paper would have enormously strengthened our positions.

Let us be frank - the cadres of this section were foully abused by Healy in numerous ways. He had a freer rein in the IC than in the committees of the WRP and decimated sections with a vengeance.

We will never return to these foul relations. If we see nationalism expressed in the WRP - as we do with the pre-conference actions - then we will tell you bluntly and expect the same in return.”

Sandford was still very critical of the WRP leaders unprincipled approach to Moreno in his letter of November 1986. As we shall see in chapter 9, by mid 1987 he had totally capitulated to the WRP leaders and was defining agreement with the WRP manoeuvres with the LIT as the basis for membership of the CL. He subsequently broke with the WRP and the CL and joined the LIT.

**International Responses**

There were international responses to Banda’s “27 Reasons”. Edmund Samarakoddy, of the Revolutionary Workers party of Sri Lanka made a contribution, published in Internal Bulletin No. 19. It was far superior to the WRP leaders analysis on the crucial questions of the actual political positions of the Fourth International leaders before the 1953 split and the positions of the IC after it. For instance he exposes Banda’s position on Algeria (we supported the wrong bourgeois nationalist) as a refusal to adopt a Trotskyist line, containing the same liquidationism as Pablo. He does evaluate seriously many of Banda’s political positions from the stand-point of one who seeks to defend Trotskyism. It contains neither the scepticism of Banda nor the apologetics of Hunter, whom he criticised.
severely for historical misrepresentations and distortions, particularly on the weakness of the US SWP as far back as the forties.

However he defends the IC tradition, defining the battle for Trotskyism as the fight against ‘Pabloism’:

“It is our view, even as the FI was destroyed by Pabloist revisionism, even so, the IC/(SLL) WRP experiment in the building of the FI collapsed not 32 years ago but two decades by the failure of those Trotskyists who correctly sensed Pabloist revisionism but failed to fight it, because they failed to understand fully the nature of Pabloist revisionism.

This has to be regarded as an abandonment, or a disregarding of all his previous quite excellent analysis on the basis the historical records of the history of revisionism in the IC in its gestation and at its birth. Never was the misuse of the term ‘Pabloism’ clearer. It suggests that the opposition to Pablo was principled. He proves the IC leaders were politically bankrupt both before and after 1953, yet the single act of split seems to represent salvation, though he even exposes the unprincipled nature of the split. This has to be seen as an attempt to gain the ear of those WRP leaders, like Pirani, who still defended, though critically, the IC. It is the method of the ‘Paris Agreement’, which the GOR signed on behalf of the WRP where a ‘left block’ was attempted between these two, the WRP and Varga on the basis of IC continuity. This agreement extended the FI continuity from 1964 to the OCI/SLL split and the Varga/Lambert split of 1971/72 and proclaimed its continued continuity in the personages of Varga, Slaughter, Samarakoddy and Pasquenelli. This is discussed in chapter 10.

Critically supported the IC against the USFI

Surely it would be correct to say that principled Trotskyists would have critically supported the IC against the USFI on the split question, liquidation to Stalinism, in 1953 from the standpoint that the FI had collapsed into centrism, and would fight for the fullest political discussion and a full struggle against all revisionism. This had to include a thoroughgoing self-criticism, something the IC never approached.

Thus the position for a rebuilding of the FI in the sense of its political, theoretical and organisational regeneration would have been the only perspective rather that seeking a will-o-the-wisp IC continuity either up to 1963 or to the present. This does seem to be Samarakoddy’s position elsewhere. Nevertheless this pungent criticism was at least partly responsible for Hunter and the WRP excluding the RWP/GOR from the Preparatory Committee, as related in Chapter 11.

L Sklavos, of the Greek Communist Internationalist League (KDE) also replied to Banda in WP on 3 May 1986. It is referred to in Chapter 11. There is little new in the letter apart from a revelation of the unprincipled manner in which the IC dealt with the Greek section and an attack on Morenoism. This probably got him excluded from the Preparatory Committee in 1987. He does make a big point about the selling of the WRP to the Arab bour-
Slaughter replied in Workers Press on 17 May 1986 to say that he (Sklavos) was right on the history of the IC in Greece but denying that either Banda or himself knew anything about selling photographs to Saddam Hussein or the selling of principles for money to the Arab bourgeoisie. Whatever about the first denial, the second cannot be taken seriously.

Of course David North’s ‘The Heritage we Defend’ takes up all these points but a reply is outside the scope of this book. The WIL’s response serialised in its paper ‘Workers News’ is recommended.

Embarrassment

The process of abandonment of Trotskyism by the Banda group became a positive embarrassment and the struggle against them was the most confused of the lot for the membership. Slaughter continued his alliance with the Banda group right up to the February Congress. In order to quell party disquiet, the Central Committee met no less than six times during that conference. Journalist and Banda supporter John Spencer correctly pointed out that this constituted contempt for the Congress, attempts to manipulate the debates and, as the highest body of the party, the Congress should take over the functions of the CC whilst it was in session. This point I was to appreciate later when I was subject to CC attacks and manipulation during the April 1987 conference. Dave Bruce had written a first version of his ‘27 Reasons and No Explanations’ document attacking Banda as a Stalinist and the meetings were basically to persuade him to tone it down as it could give comfort to the Northites. He was later to regret his agreement to do so. The WRP did not even announce Banda’s expulsion until four months after it happened.

The Banda split was not homogeneous. A fight against the cynical falsifying of history for factional reasons by Banda could have lead to a thoroughgoing re-working of that history and a regeneration of Trotskyism. That failure at that point in early 1986 and the later document of Slaughter to the Eight Congress which again began the defence of the IC tradition in the old propagandist way convinced many comrades that Trotskyism was indeed dead.

It was enormously distressing to see comrades you had known for many years and new ones forged in the struggle against Healy suddenly abandon Trotskyism as no answers were being sought by party leaders apart from abject confessions of guilt, when pressed, on their past crimes. Workers Power encountered some of these people who began the questioning of history and found some agreement on the bankruptcy of both the IC and USec traditions. However the majority were in the process of repudiating the entire content of Trotskyism and not simply the errors and betrayals of its distorters. After initial hesitations they suddenly abandoned all and became either Stalinists or just dropped out.

The split with the Banda group eventually took place after the incident in the Liverpool book shop. Here Banda supporters were observed removing books from the bookshop
and they also issued a statement which was given to the CP bookshop in Liverpool. It was on these issues they were charged with expulsion. However the response of the WRP majority supporters was to break into Tony Banda’s flat in the bookshop and remove his library to London.

There was also the long running dispute between Tony Banda, Janet Banda (Mike’s wife) and the WRP CC over who owned the shares of the WRP companies. The political direction of this group was summed up by Tony Banda when he declared at the February Congress that “Trotskyism is a rotten rope.” They were impossible to compromise with any further, so Slaughter abandoned his alliance. (l)

**Issues of Importance**

A few other issues of importance emerged in relations with the Banda group. The question of blind activism being one of the fundamental methods of party control was very much part of their platform, but it became a justification of total inactivity in the end.

The other was the question of physical violence. Mike and Tony Banda had used Healy’s favourite political argument on Stuart Carter and his supporters in early 1985 and Mike Banda had assaulted Corinna Lotz, a Healy supporter, during the split. Mathew Nugent, the News Line sports editor and a Banda supporter, had likewise assaulted a young YS member who supported the Hyland group. We would outlaw such methods in the party in future, we were assured by the leadership.

However when Bob Archer was struck in the face during a CC meeting in April by a supporter of the majority from Liverpool because he suggested that Tony Banda should be given some democratic rights, the meeting accepted this. Even when a motion came to the next meeting condemning this action, Dave Temple, the CC chairman, and many others defended the action for a considerable period.

This matter was to rise again at the end of 1986. It was reported to the CC that Wayne Poulsen had beaten up Chris McBride, a young comrade. The CC detailed John Simmance to investigate and produce a report for the CC because of the expressions of outrage from Clare Cowen and others (“he should be expelled”). This report never appeared. McBride had meekly accepted his chastisement and made no complaint. After a disagreement with Geoff Pilling on whether he (Pilling) should be buying The Times during the Wapping dispute (Workers Press had just sneered at the Healy supporter, Clair Dixon, for doing so) McBride became a ‘good comrade’ (nearly).

I first wrote to Dot Gibson with a copy to the Control Commission, raising this and other matters, on 1 April 1987. There was no reply. I again wrote to the Control Commission on 3 July, requesting inclusion of the correspondence in the Internal Bulletin. A reply from Dot Gibson (who was not on the Control Commission) on 17 August told me that these matters could not go in the Internal Bulletin as they were in the hands of the Control Commission and to write to them - even though I had just done so.

I wrote again to the Control Commission on 14 September withdrawing my complaint so
that it could go in the Internal Bulletin, On 27 October (!) Peter Rickard replied for the
Control Commission for the first time, saying that the matter had been dealt with by
themselves (which I discovered to be untrue when I contacted anti-bureaucratic Control
Commission members Mary T from the Western Region and “Bish” from Derby) and the
Central Committee (also untrue) to the satisfaction of all concerned, and no, the corre-
spondence could not go in the Internal Bulletin. Catch 22! The Control Commission was
obviously again a ‘Controlled Commission’ as Cyril Smith had observed on his own role
in the frame-up of Thornett. I was offered a hearing by the Chair of this body, Liz Leices-
ter, at the Ninth Congress a year after the incident, just as the Internationalist Faction
looked like leaving. This never materialised and Dave Temple, the Congress Chair, re-
fused to take my question on the Control Commission report I had had enough at that
stage, and the issue was never subsequently dealt with. The question of violence and the
Phil Penn case will be dealt with in Chapter Seven.

Postscript to the old WRP

It is interesting to note the make up of the CC elected at the 7th Congress in late 1984 and
how these members went in the various splits. Of the 43 members elected to the CC 31
were full time party workers. (The WRP’s bloated apparatus contained 91 full time work-
ers at the time of the split, more than the Labour party had). All 15 who went with Healy
were full time party workers. Two of the three who went with the Hyland group were
full time party workers. Of the remainder, 6 departed at or soon after the first split, 7 sup-
ported Banda (6 full time party workers) and of the remaining 12 who supported Slaugh-
ter 6 were full time party workers. After all the splits the WRP (Workers Press) still has
nine (at most) of the original CC of 43.

Of the original 43 there were two building workers (one full time party), two bus work-
ers, one miner, one car worker, one office worker, one hospital worker, one student, one
lecturer, one party mechanic, three unemployed and most of the rest could be described
as middle class professionals who made large sacrifices in careers etc. to serve the revolu-
tion full time. The perversion of these high ideals is a tragedy that cannot simply be at-
tributed to Healy or Healyism but to enormous objective difficulties and consequent theo-
retical problems encountered by those who sough to fight for revolutionary politics dur-
ing capitalism’s long post-war boom.

Footnote:

1) Mike Banda and thirteen of his supporters were eventually expelled by the CC on 28
May 1986.
Chapter 3: Interregnum & Glasnost 1986

“Macavity, Macavity, there’s no one like Macavity, There never was a cat of such deceitfulness and suavity. Re always has an alibi, and one or two to spare: At whatever time the deed took place - MACAVITY WASN’T THERE!”

T S Eliot, Macavity: The Mystery Cat

Or how the old WRP leadership (and Cliff Slaughter in particular) survived the period of reassessment and re-examination.

During 1986 the political discussions with other groups got under way in earnest. A new Central Committee was elected at the Eight Congress session of 15 March and Simon Pirani, Dave Bruce and Chris Bailey, a long-time member from Cambridge emerged as the most progressive of the new party leaders. Also a second tier of leaders were emerging like John Simmance, a former YS National Secretary and an AEU shop steward at Charing Cross hospital who returned to a leadership role in party work after the split. His standing was won on the good articles he was writing analysing the Torrance WRP (News Line) during the Wapping print strike when they had defended Brenda Dean and the trade union bureaucracy who sold out that dispute.

Lynn Beaton, formerly of the Australian IC group the SLL, did good work for Workers Press on Ireland. Phil Penn was active on the Guildford Four, Richard Goldstein, an AEU member from east London, was taking a leading role as was Keith Scotcher, another AEU member from Fords Dagenham. These two were leading trade unionists. I had begun to make a contribution too on Ireland and other issues, very much under Pirani’s influence at the time.

Aspiring Bureaucrats

The other layer of aspiring bureaucrats had little to say in this period. Slaughter and Dot Gibson retreated into the background and missed many PC and CC meetings. There was a new spirit of reconstructing something useful. The Workers Press had many new people writing for it and issues like Ireland, the Labour party, youth perspectives and special oppression were being examined. However leadership in the class struggle there was not, nor was any consistent strategy developed. The Manifesto that we did adopt at the 3rd session of the 8th Congress in June was never applied to the class struggle. Its perspectives were very vague in any case. None of the new or the old leaders had been party builders with the result that intervention in the class struggle was on an ad hoc individual basis with no caucusing beforehand.

In fact all the academics who had never carried out any practical work in the class struggle in their own place of work, and whose basic function had been to supply Healy with a veneer of Marxist orthodoxy were now lost without a leader. The academics were akin to hired hands who supplied whatever ideas or justifications were required to enable Healy
to carry out his current orientation, whatever that might be.

The role of the intellectual in capitalist society, supplying the ruling class with an ideology justifying the oppression of the working class, was replicated by the academics within the WRP, except that now they performed this service for Healy. Trotsky analysed the growing intellectual prostitution of this layer in his booklet The Intelligentsia and Socialism. When faced with the task of actualising their theories they had no idea, having always moved in the realm of pure ideas. Oh how they needed a ‘doer’, a new Healy. This will be examined in more detail in the section on dialectical materialism in the next chapter.

Simon Pirani the only one who could now fill the role of party builder, but be had never fought a factional battle in his life where he was not guaranteed victory in advance. His great principles only developed according as the numbers appeared favourable, and after a feeble attempt to remain true to the spirit of the spilt with Healy when a real opposition emerged from Slaughter and the rest at the end of 1986 on the question of the Open Conference which Slaughter wanted closed, he ratted and blocked with the academics and layer of middle ranking aspirant trade union bureaucrats. The opposing types of political characters, Varga (1) and Moreno (2), were then becoming the new Healys.

Pirani’s standing in the party rested on the very good work he was beginning to do on Ireland (which I’ll deal with later) and on his contribution to the 3rd session of the Eighth Congress. In early May he produced his 11 page ‘Contribution on International Perspectives’ which was endorsed at that session. This was his best attempt at assessing the history of the IC and fighting for the regeneration of the party. It was the theoretical reflection of, and an inspiration for the best period of the struggle for the new leadership.

He repudiated the Banda group-inspired splitting resolution of the first session of the Eight Congress (Down with the Fraud of the ICFI) written by Dave Good (3) and began a real attempt at re-assessment of the post war era. He rejected the characterisation of the IC as anticommunist and the motion for the dissolution of that body as an attempt to avoid the responsibility for our past actions. He asserted that we had rejected the authority of the ICFI not because it was anti-Trotskyist and anticommunist but because it did not represent the World party of Socialist revolution (or the nucleus of it).

**Slaughter horrified by turn of events**

Pirani called this the most thoroughgoing reassessment of the history of the IC tradition but left many questions up in the air hoping it seems that some of the academics would shoulder the responsibility for that. We are still waiting for them! In particular he rejected the identification with the IC tradition and the characterisation of the USFI as ‘revisionist’ (suggesting that some form of unidentified continuity ran through the IC tradition) ???????? and the vagueness of the estimation of the struggle against Pablo (to be left to a later date) was an attempted rapprochement with the other sections of the IC out-
side Britain and the US and a sop to the old ‘crap’.

Slaughter in particular was horrified by this turn of events, though it was this very de-
fence of the IC tradition (critical as it was) that was later to supply the ammunition for the re-emergence of the old guard with the help of Varga. It was also an attempt to differenti-
ate ourselves from Workers Power, whose position on the Fourth International many
member, like Mick Bishop and his followers (a section of the Banda group who joined the
CP) and later Chris Bailey and his followers, approximated to as they sought to estimate
the history ‘of Trotskyism only to go straight through it and out the other side and aban-
don Trotskyism itself.

There was also an understandable reluctance to concede that any of the points that Banda
had made in his document (for anti-Trotskyist reasons and with a sceptical method)
might possibly have substance to them and need detailed answers. In other words the
eternal problem in a heated political struggle emerged: there was a tendency to put a plus
where ever your opponent had a minus.

**Militant tenor of Pirani’s document**

But perhaps more important than the historical assessment (and maybe even because of it)
was the whole militant tenor of Pirani’s document and the contempt for the old leaders,
then quite rife in the party because of the whole Banda fiasco. On p. 3 he says:

‘Comrades supported North because they (quite rightly) didn’t trust Banda and Slaugh-
ter, and (wrongly) because they thought North had the answers.’

And on p. 8 he fumes:

The resolution ‘Dissolve the ICFI’ (Down with the Fraud of the ICFI. GD) has an appall-
ing section which starts off with the assertion ‘The WRP was an organisation that was not
revolutionary’. Like Dave North (the IC is the continuity of Trotskyism, and comrades
Hunter, Pilling and Smith (‘the WRP was and is a revolutionary party’) [This document
had been produced at a national aggregate and withdrawn in haste when it met with al-
most universal scorn. GD] comrade Good gives us one of those over-simplified labels that
stifle discussion. None of these statements are right? …A sharp struggle lies ahead to
make the party revolutionary.”

And as if to forecast his own abandonment of that struggle:

‘However small the numbers of comrades involved this party must not jump out of the
relationship with them (the IC) in the petty bourgeois manner typified by this resolution;
this must be corrected otherwise the same anti-Marxist method will dominate all our
work internationally; we will perhaps ‘jump in’ to something else in a similarly ill-
considered way’

Just one year later all that was gone and Pirani was all for such an ill-considered jump in’
with the Morenoites. It should be mentioned that Pirani forged the left wing alliance with
Chris Bailey with this document. It was to endure until the end of the year. Lottie Bailey had close family ties with the German IC group and Chris Bailey, her husband, visited Germany in an unsuccessful attempt to open up that group for political discussions, much against the wishes of the old WRP leadership.

Also at this session a Manifesto was drawn up, in the most extraordinary way. It consisted of a draft drawn up by Pilling and amended out of recognition by several branches. ‘People power’ had really come to the WRP!

In particular the Kilburn branch, on my instigation, had removed the formulation The miners were not defeated’ and replaced it with The miners were defeated in their immediate aims. The working class as a whole was not defeated ‘. The appearance of Healy’s old formulation used to excuse his own falsified perspectives and to defend the ‘correctness’ of the leadership of Scargill was correctly reject by the Congress. It did not make its appearance again until six months later, when it again became party policy, against the Manifesto commitment.

The Manifesto could have been a good point of departure, reflecting all the militancy of the party at the time, though having that vagueness in precise detail and programme that was eventually to prove fatal. The party bureaucracy, Gibson et al, were so inspired by the document that it was not printed for seven months! By this stage the militant upsurge had been blunted, the old leaders were re-emerging and the Manifesto could be effectively ignored. Like others before her Gibson realised the power base that financial and administrative control gave her and used it to undermine the upsurge. She made absolutely no political contribution to the struggle to regenerate the party, having a bureaucratic solution to all political problems.

\textit{The Era of Glasnost}

The first group the party opened discussions with was the Socialist Group (SG). This was the remainder of the old WSL after the split with Sean Matgamna. I have already mentioned the ‘Battle for Trotskyism” as being one of the early formative external influences on me and also on many others, though Pilling, Smith and Slaughter never admitted the real progressive nature of that 1974 split. Smith did admit, in a Workers Press article, that, as leader of the Control Commission, he had framed the Thornett faction on Healy’s instructions. This drew howls of outrage from the ICP, who presumably still defend the assaults and frame-ups by the WRP in that struggle.

Pilling reported back quite favourably on talks he and I had with JL and Alan Thornett, but the sticking point seemed to be the SG’s insistence on the necessity of working in the Labour party. The academics had no time for this type of ‘reformist’ practice which involved too much ‘tactics’ i.e. too much orientation to the labour movement and a real struggle with the reformist consciousness of the working class. Besides much blood was spilt in 1974 and a fusion with the SG would leave the academics with too many potential enemies, moreover ones skilled in the art of faction fighting. And there was a bigger fish
to fry, Moreno who would never forgive Land Thornett for the exposure of his appalling past history and his unprincipled ‘Parity Commission’ fusion with Lambert and the French OCI in the early 1980s.

Bob Myers, a long time member who had been on the CC for a period in the 1970s said at one point that in so far as there was any continuity of Trotskyism, it went with Thornett in 1974. He was impressed, too, with the Workers Power’s ‘Death Agony of the Fourth International’ but was reluctant to do anything about the conflict between these political positions and those old Healyite positions re-emerging from the WRP leaders. The Workers Socialist League’s (the group founded by the Thornett split of 1974) International Perspectives, (written in the late 1970s) in particular, were far superior to anything produced in the WRP, particularly in explaining ‘Pabloism’ and the history of the IC.

John Lister’s book on Cuba had the same serious Marxist approach of analysing all the empirical data before coming to a conclusion, rather than imposing dogma on reality. I could well have joined them at that stage as they seemed to me to have a healthy attitude to the problems of the WRP and did not attempt to steal members because their ambition and mine was to effect a fusion between the WRP and the SG. It was not until the end 1987 that I developed any real critical analysis of their Labour party entry work, particularly of the Briefing project, which had a left of the left’ strategy. This left no room for revolutionary Trotskyism and confused and sometimes equated it with left reformism.

Quite Impressed

Chris Bailey and I attended the joint Conference of the Socialist Group and the International Group in Leeds in the Summer of that year and were quite impressed by what we found. Clearly there were very “Pabloite” tendencies among the International Group but their left wing tended to ally with the SG on most important issues. The strongest disagreements were around the oppression - of women and whether Nicaragua was a Workers state. The IG women had a very developed bourgeois feminist, non-class position on the former question but were being strongly opposed by some politically advanced women from the WSL/SG tradition who were not giving an inch. The left of the SG were very hopeful at that stage that a fusion with the WRP would strengthen their hand in the struggle around the fusion debates with the IG.

In fact, the very clear impression I got was that here was a struggle opening up among comrades and the WRP was in a position to influence the outcome if they could move into closer relations with the groups before the fusion. This was perhaps a naive assessment, made without a detailed knowledge of all the unprincipled compromises that had been made by the SG leaders to Matgamna in the split struggle (and before I realised the WRP leaders were beyond reform). However such tactics were ruled out by the WRP in any case.

The SG was the natural point of reference for the WRP, as it had gone through the same type of a struggle as them against Healyism in 1974 and tackled many of the questions
now faced by the WRP with a good deal of success. Thornett made a number of correct points about the nature of the WRP’s intervention in the trade unions. He rubbished the notion of the ‘individual communist’ and pointed that such an individual had, of necessity to be either a cranky sectarian or capitulate to the left union bureaucrats, without the guidance of a revolutionary party. Thornett also promoted his pamphlet on the miners’ strike, which had much correct observations on how the strike could have been won, but regarded Scargill’s leadership as being as good as could be expected, hardly a position a Trotskyist could defend.

However much of the SG’s intervention was on the issue of the internal regime and putting the record straight. They made no attempt to intervene in the classes in Capital and other public meetings of the WRP to which the rag tag and bobtail of the left flocked during 1986 and which were the focus of attention of those in the WRP who sought to re-establish some ideological cohesion in the group. Intervention was based on proposals for joint work in trade unions and in other campaigns. This could not solve the political crisis the WRP had been plunged into by the expulsion of Healy.

In fact their reluctance to conduct an open fight for their own political and theoretical positions must have reflected a fear of the open struggle against other groups since the two successful raids by the Spartacists on them a number of years previously. They were, in many ways, the opposite side of the coin of the Workers Power, who launched a hostile assault on the WRP leadership and did not really seek fusion but the recruitment of individual members. This method also insulated the Workers Power rank and file from other groups.

**Death Agony of the Fourth International**

Workers Power and their “Death Agony of the Fourth International’ was a big surprise. Here at last was a real answer to Banda’s scepticism, though I could never agree with their idea that the Fourth International died in 1953 and perhaps it would be necessary to found a Fifth. The ambiguity of this position, I later discovered, was the result of an internal conflict between three groups.

One current has Fourth Internationalists leanings, while others veer towards a Fifth Internationalist position, drawing the logical conclusion from their sectarian attitude towards the struggles to reassert the Trotskyist Programme over the past 40 years. The leadership basically attempts to straddle both camps with a formulation that leaves the problem to history to solve: a formulation of a new Leninist-Trotskyist International.

The position of the International Trotskyist Committee, whom I eventually joined, was the one that seemed to me to solve this problem They agree that the Fourth International ceased to exist as a revolutionary centre in 1953. This was due to the split and the failure of the IC to struggle for political clarity, departing on the eve of the Fourth World Congress because they could not expose the revisionism of Pablo without explaining why they had been the foremost defendants of that revisionism right up to the split.
However having descended into centrism, the majority of groups became ‘Trotskyists Centrist’ groups, that is any internal struggle tended to develop towards a struggle to re-assert the Trotskyist programme because of the formal orientation of those groups to it. Obviously many groups, like the Spartacists, the UK SWP and Militant, the US SWP and the LSSP of Sri Lanka had departed entirely from any claim to Trotskyism. It flowed from this analysis that a special orientation was necessary to the Trotskyist Centrists and special attention was to be paid to splits and faction fights within them in the battle to re-construct to Fourth International.

The Old Leadership Struggles to Regain its Feet

In January and February 1986 Cyril Smith began a series of lectures on Capital at which the Workers Power made a big intervention. The dog-fight with them commenced with obscure and heated arguments on surplus value, the commodity and philosophy and the method of ‘Capital’ at these meetings. This confused many members and served to prove that at least Smith knew more than they (the members) did about this. However WP did score some hits on questions of philosophy and orientation to the working class. But it was the method of the WP that was so wrong. On 16 February they produced their ‘Open Letter to the Central Committee and Membership’ which basically proposed a programme for fusion. It only succeeded in outraging the membership and giving a weapon into the hands of those leaders who were only riding the storm. There was no appreciation of, or sensitivity to, a political process in train among the membership, there was no idea that members were not going to be bounced into a fusion against the leadership until they had sorted out what that leadership was and what they were them-selves, politically -

Indeed this attitude was a product of their ambiguous position on the Fourth International if there was not a special need to struggle through the contradictions and to encourage a real fight to re-establish the Trotskyist programme within those groups who still retained some links with it, then a few members was all you could hope for from the crises in these organisations.

The WP won four members eventually but did nothing for the inner struggle for regeneration. In the West London (Kilburn) branch two members left to join Workers Power. They became complete supporters of Workers Power’s line overnight, arguing every point of their programme in a series of heated branch meetings. Though I agreed with many of the points they made the method of approach was disastrous. There were no tactics, no patient campaigning to win support for views on the concrete issues of the class struggle - simply a take it or leave it line. This seemed so unbelievable to everybody particularly from SM, who actually pioneered the idea behind Labour Briefing going fortnightly. He was denouncing his own brainchild within a short few weeks!

Instead of a patient struggle to form a faction (this would have been very useful later) the two members issued a resignation letter and left the party. It was not the way to settle
accounts with the heritage of Healyism or to sort out your own political ideas. It is clear that Workers Power felt that they were wasting their time struggling within the WRP for political regeneration or even to win a faction to Workers Power.

The other comrade who joined Workers Power from Kilburn, L, produced a very good document on the abandonment of Permanent Revolution by the WRP and opposing the myth of continuity despite degeneration. However it did not seek to make relationships with those of us who wished to overcome our past. A simple admission of error could not trace the roots of the degeneration. Of course the WRP could have engaged WP with the prospect of influencing the inner process in that organisation in our direction but such thoughts in regard to WP or any other group never entered the heads of WRP leaders,

When leadership discussions did take place only Dave Bruce had read the WP documents on South Africa, with Smith and Hunter making the most vague and abstract contributions and displaying total ignorance on the subject. No wonder some of the WRP leaders wanted rid of this troublesome group. A contrived argument about the accuracy of the minutes taken by the WP of this meeting served to deepen the rift.

They were bureaucratically excluded from the trade union school at the Central London Poly in November held by the WRP, Socialist Group and International Group. Having soured relations with a large group who could perhaps have been won with a better approach that did not consist of ripping off members. Their didactic (dogmatic?) approach with no suggestion that any of their own positions were up for discussion was not the one calculated to impress, despite having the most developed programme and policies we had encountered to date.

**Appalling Record**

The Socialist Labour Group, at that time linked to the French ICO, made an intervention too. It was from this group that I first got the Dermot Whelan document, detailing the appalling record of the SLL in Ireland. Whelan had been a follower of Healy in Ireland who examined the history of Healy in Ireland and discovered the most appalling chauvinism. That he then joined the French international group of Lambert is an indication of the failure on all sides to really grasp the essential similarities between both groups.

This group, however, was obviously too close to the old positions of the WRP, sharing, in a more exaggerated form, its Stalinophobia, its objectivism and its capitulation to social democracy, the dominant features of the IC tradition. Healy tended to capitulate to the left wing of Social Democracy but Lambert was worse. He capitulated to Social Democracy as a whole. Alex McLarty, one of the longest serving party members from Scotland, left with this group around June, along with another member from south London. McLarty had been one of the earliest to begin the political struggle against Healy submitting an internal document on the United Front around August 1985.

A number of other British groups, ranging from the RCP to the RCG enjoyed the favour
of the WRP for greater or lesser periods of time after that but a clear pattern began to emerge. In order to give the membership an impression of progress, relations would deepen and flourish with one particular group. As soon as the sympathies of the membership began to pose the question of fusion, sharp disagreements would be brought to the fore and they would be compared unfavourably with the next group until they also became too close in their turn.

Important in the inner struggle was the battle for control of the Workers Press. Dave Bruce had taken over the editorship in January and had made the paper one of the most exciting on the left, even if (or because?) it lacked a clear political direction. Its openness made it a forum for all types of political debate, much to the disgust of the old guard. The first blow in the counter-attack came on the question of the publication of the letter from The Leninist on 12 June. This is a serious, though very sectarian group within the CPGB who had renounced many of the more Stalinist aspects of Stalinism, though of course not the basic theoretical foundations. Their CP opponents falsely labelled them Trotskyists. Certainly a group any healthy Trotskyist party would want to lock horns with.

**Hullabaloo**

From Cyril Smith, Dot Gibson and Bill Hunter came a great hullabaloo. How could we print the letter from these arch Stalinists? What have we become? etc. And this from the crew who collaborated with the Stalinist Mike Banda and who would not tolerate any criticisms of the close political alliance (not simply a united front) developed with the RCG on South African work and the Non Stop Picket of the South African Embassy. They are the most dogmatic Stalinists on the scene in Britain, saying that it was correct for the ‘Red Army’ to massacre the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 etc. The total support at the same time for the popular front between the Argentinean MAS and the CP, which is far to the right of the Leninist is another case of the disgusting double standards of the above named WRP group.

Workers Power criticised our relationship with the RCG during the Guildford Four campaign, in which they participated. The RCG had no labour movement orientation, always using a populist/Stalinist line of ‘mass work’, and the WRP were conceding too much to this position. claimed Workers Power. The WRP said that these criticisms stemmed from the sectarianism of WP. I now think that we did concede too much to them. It arose from lack of clear party perspectives.

A guerrilla warfare type struggle was waged against Dave Bruce’s editorship of the Workers Press with little assistance being organised to help production. The last blow was when a witch hunt was organised by Dot Gibson when a letter was printed from an International Group supporter (unapproved by them) which claimed that some hospital strikers were moonlighting and wasn’t this a disgrace? A disclaimer was printed but this did not prevent an instruction going out from Dot Gibson to rip out the offending page. Considering the far more appalling letters that were printed later by Pilling from Brian
Pearce on Ireland, with no disclaimers, this can only be seen as the old guard striking a blow at the new leadership. Bruce’s health was not good and he eventually had to resign under this pressure. Pilling was installed as editor and a campaign was launched to give him as much assistance as he needed.

Chris Bailey, a long time member from Cambridge who was despised by Healy, had emerged as an enthusiastic leader and was quickly put in charge of international work. His work was characterised by its originality and openness. However his determination to keep all questions opened all the time eventually had fatal political consequences for him. He produced some good theoretical articles, ‘The Practice of Cognition??’ ‘In Defence of Thought” and others. His very long document ‘A Critique of Wolforth’s Theory of Structural Assimilation’ I will discuss in the section on Stalinism. It was never evaluated in the WRP, I suspect because Slaughter did not understand it and did not have the theoretical ability to tackle any complex and original document like that. The second stage of the counter-attack was the dethroning of Chris Bailey.

**Orientation to the Working Class**

In that period four other issues of importance also emerged. These were Ireland, youth perspectives, women’s oppression and the Labour party. These all contained the issues of strategic and tactical orientation to the working class. Ireland will be dealt with under a separate section, but the issue was of crucial importance for the regeneration of the party. The question of the double oppression of gays and lesbians did not really appear until the period of reaction in the party, despite the publication of some letters on the subject. In May 1987 it got short shrift with the disgraceful treatment of Brian Dempsey.

The question of entryism was never resolved in the WRP, with the result that a sectarianism began to re-emerge in that area. Keith Scotcher and Slaughter too later attacked positions that did not exist viz. ‘those who say the Labour party is the main issue’. Slaughter took the view, in a document he produced on the issue, that if we recruited members in the Labour party (accidentally, presumably) then we should leave them there. Now there’s tactics!

But all through 1986 the dominant idea was that entry work should be organised, particularly into the LPYS. Jolyon Ralph wrote a good assessment of the YS, which reflected the dominant thinking, at the end of 1986 in Internal Bulletin 19. Basically he blamed the final period of degeneration of the movement on the decision to turn away from entry work in the Labour party after the expulsion of the Young Socialists in 1965. The problem with this approach was that it attempted to find the root of the whole process of degeneration in one tactical error, without examining the political roots of this degeneration. This method itself contains the real danger of opportunism.

The hostility of the leadership to developing a tactical orientation to the Labour party was clear from the Political Committee (now beginning to produce its own political statements) on 27 September. A list of the betrayals of the Labour leaders and a warning of
future betrayals. but no transitional demands and no struggle proposed within the Labour party.

During the Knowsley by-election the Liverpool branch decided to support the candidate of the RCP against the NEC imposed Labour candidate. Only Charlie Pottins was ready to point out the stupid nonsense of this line. This was symptomatic of the total lack of ideological cohesion still prevalent in the party. A year later Pottins wrote a good analysis of the capitulation of the party to Labour lefts; ‘Much Ado about Camden’ only to be battered into submission by the exposure of his anti-Trotskyist position on the PLO which everyone had known about all along anyway. To quote from has document:

“My concern is that over one issue after another, Knowsley, North, McGoldrick, CUAC (Camden Unemployed Centre) and Camden the party seem not to get involved at all or gets involved without a distinct approach, while individual comrades are left to argue the toss, either with others or among ourselves. Practice which is without theoretical perspectives is complemented by theory which does not descend to questions of practice.”

Pottins hit the nail on the head in describing the rudderless WRP.

On 3 May Jolyon Ralph wrote an article proposing a monthly youth magazine and work in the YTS schemes. The following week Matt Hanlon made some similar, though better worked proposals for work in the trade unions and colleges. Ali Mir, of the London Red Youth and ex WSL made a very serious contribution in the same issue on similar lines as Ralph’s but containing the same dangers. Ali Mir correctly pointed out, however, that the 1965 turn involved waiting for objective processes to drive the masses into the SLL/YS rather than fighting to win politically advanced youth to the programme of Trotskyism by the method of transitional demands. Of course the whole process of degeneration cannot be blamed on what was essentially only a wrong tactic.

Surely this was one manifestation of degeneration, which could have been corrected if the rest of the party’s political positions had been healthy. Militant had led the big school strikes and here was a real forum for a political struggle, he wrote. Kevin Townsend replied on 17 May, criticising some reformist aspects of Mir’s paper Red Youth, (Reform, rather than smash the LPYS but also conceding that they must wait for a lead from the party on the question of the LPYS and other issues. The youth are still waiting or would be if they hung around until now. The re-emerging old conservative leadership had a real contempt for the youth and never assisted them in any way. When Chris McBride got the beating from Wayne Poulsen and nothing was done about it this almost signalled the end of the youth movement.

**A Hesitant Stand on Social Issues**

A statement to the Women’s Commission on 2 August was the beginning of the short lived struggle to fight for class politics in the women’s movement and establish a political perspective for the WRP in that field. It was a good statement as far as it went, apart from
the extraordinary notion that they were the first Trotskyists to attempt this. The prime issue on which Healy was expelled, the misuse of his position of trust to abuse women comrades, was re-examined by Liz Leicester and Clare Cowen in Workers Press on 6 December. The issue had become so important that Cliff Slaughter was compelled to devote over half of his winding up speech to this issue at the Special Congress in November. That never happened in the WRP before and there is no danger of it ever happening again. They developed the theory that Healy’s actions constituted a form of incest rather than rape and were correct to repudiate Hyland’s position that revolutionary morality was the cause of the explosion in the WRP, as outlined by ‘A Special Correspondent’ of the News Uric of the Slaughter/Banda group of 2 November 1985:

“For the first time and possibly the last, the party has been split not on tactical or programmatic issues, but on the most basic question of revolutionary morality.”

This also, by implication, refuted Slaughter’s use of that position against North and could have been a big step forward.

By repudiating the Hyland position that this was only a diversion and locating the issue in the upsurge of the oppressed in the social movement around the miners’ strike a real advance on the question was on the cards. However, as in all these questions to fight for the issue in the class, a revolutionary must first be able to fight in his or her own party. Slaughter basically patronised the movement and then compromised the women comrades on other issues.

By the time of time of the Ninth Congress a year later the Women’s Commission could only produce the most pathetic of documents, a page and a half of banalities such as might be got from non-political teenagers studying sociology. Reaction was indeed triumphant. The resolution made no mention of the double oppression of women and merely pointed to the increasing burden borne by women because of cuts in the NHS and council services. The only programmatic issues raised are a minimum wage and equal pay for equal work and that the leadership of the trade unions should reflect the female membership more closely.

The resolution says:

“The split which overthrew him (Healy) opened up the question of the role of women in the revolutionary party, in capitalist society and in the deformed and degenerated workers states. Serious theoretical and practical work on these questions is just beginning.”

One would be entitled to ask what the rest of the world was doing on these questions? Waiting for the WRP to overthrow Healy, it seems! And why was this work below even the level it had reached a year previous?

I was ashamed of my own and the party’s backwardness on special oppression and sought out the views of Worker’s Power, the SG and many individuals on the subject. in particular Marge Piercy’s book Woman on the Edge of Time, being pushed by a Kilburn
branch member BD, became a ‘must’ for any party member wishing to develop progres-
sive views on this. I found it deeply disturbing at first read but when I read it again a few
years later I realised it had strongly influenced my own development on special oppres-
sion. It depicted a revolutionary vision of a future classless society on a far broader scale
than had ever been envisaged by ‘orthodox’ Trotskyists.

The RIL first point out to me that all I had done up to then was to develop progressive
bourgeois-liberal positions on special oppression to overcome reactionary ones and what
was needed was a revolutionary programme and perspectives in this work. No other ten-
dency outside the RIL and the ITC had engaged in this work to such an extent and with
such seriousness with these perspectives. Their only serious rival in this area, Workers
Power, always were and are now developing more and more economistic, workerist posi-
tions such as the idea than only working class lesbians and gays are really oppressed.

A Three Pronged Alliance

The November 1986 Congress produced the first call for the International Conference. It
comprised seven points (there had originally been only six) and met with fairly wide-
spread approval. Contacts had been made with many groups internationally and hopes
were high that a regroupment process at last was about to begin. So it was, but not as we
expected it. Chris Bailey produced an international report detailing international contacts
with some 26 countries and six groups in Britain.

We had developed relations with the ‘Verite’ group, the Fourth International (rebuilt) in
the Spring of 1986. They had emerged in a split from Lambert in 1972. Their leader ini-
tially was Michel Varga. Stefan Bekier, a leading member of theirs, had done a tour of the
coalfields etc. with the WRP. This group had a very strong line on the revolutionary con-
tinuity of the IC tradition. Slaughter had also encountered Michael Varga, and old IC mem-
ber from the days before the French and British sections split. He was now a bitter oppo-
nent of the Verite group, having split from them earlier. Varga had the additional attrac-
tion of having only a small group, so did not pose a threat to Slaughter’s leadership.

He also had very powerful Stalinophobic positions, which were later to become the ideo-
logical gel for the WRP. The Verite group were substantially correct in their polemic on
Stalinism against Varga in the split as Laffont, a leader of their French section, was on the
same issue against Slaughter, whatever the later problems of the group. Even Bob Archer
was of the opinion that the Verite was correct against Varga for a while, until he found his
opinion was not suitable. Slaughter here forged the first prong of the alliance that gave
him back his confidence to begin the assault to overturn the new and too open leadership.

The second prong of the alliance was quickly forged. I had missed the November Confer-
ence, having been sent to Dublin to attend the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis. However I knew
something fundamental had changed following the fiasco of the joint trade union school
with the IG and the SG on the 15th and 16th of November. Workers Power were bureau-
cratically excluded from this meeting and the relationship with the groups was deliber-
ately blown up by a series of provocations. Geoff Pilling was our speaker, a man who never took any part in a trade union in his life. He concentrated using his role as an ‘intellectual’ to attempt to humiliate Andrea C, the speaker for the SG, who was a leading SG trade union militant, but not one of the leading theoreticians of the SG. This was not Marxism, he fumed and Chris Bailey, wound up by Pilling, took up the refrain.

The entire argument ranged about how to characterise the outcome of the miners’ strike. There was no defeat insisted Pilling (if a reduction of the membership of the NUM, from almost 200,000 before the strike to 50,000 in 1990 is not a defeat then there is no such thing as a defeated strike). But Dave Temple capped it all. The slogan ‘the miners were not defeated’ was back and every leading member was using it, against the formal position of their own party Manifesto, when Temple stated that he had told his NUM members at the start of the strike that they could not win (and so presumably could not lose) and a victory would have strengthened centrism; “I ask you would it have been easier or harder to recruit to the party if the miners had won? It would have been harder!”

This position can only be seen as an unconditional defence of Scargill’s leadership (in fact ‘the miners were not defeated’ was Scargill’s slogan) and a ploy to cover up the political capitulation to Scargill of the leading miners in the WRP. These were the conduit for Healy’s liquidation to left reformism and Healy’s determination to defend this slogan after the miners’ strike was a defence of this and of Dave Temple, his main conduit to Scargill. Temple’s 1983 pamphlet ‘British Miners and the Capitalist Crisis’, actually written by Mike Banda, had been very critical of Scargill’s leadership. The reality of a severe conflict exposed the revolutionary posturing of the WRP, and without a programme on how to proceed capitulation to left reformism was inevitable.

I could see that the party were now determined to sever relations with these groups and I still felt close to the SG. I recognised this drivel as a blatant manoeuvre, which Simon Pirani assured me he had nothing to do with (though he was very enthusiastically whipping up reaction among the WRP members behind the scenes before he left the meeting). It was only much later I connected this with Moreno and the hostility he had to Thornett and Lister, due to their exposure of his opportunism in the late 1970s on the issue of the unprincipled fusion with Lambert’s OCI and on other matters.

Unspoken Bloc

The unspoken bloc that was formed between the academics and the middle bureaucrats was a contract to keep past crimes and present practices concealed and unchallenged. The explicit defence of Scargill’s role in the miners’ strike by Dave Temple in Workers Press, 23 January 1988: “He (Scargill) above all others represents the fight back of the working class against Tory reaction and Labour and TU collaboration.” was the final expression of: “The miners were not defeated”.

Chief among the rest of this crew was Hughie Nicol a trade unionist from the North East, John Simmance, who voted against the Wapping printers on the mandate of the AEU at
the 1986 TUC Conference and was also of the opinion that Scargill should not be criticised during the Presidential election, Jim Bevan, a full time AEU organiser from Wales and the appalling Peter Gibson who as chair of the London Bus Committee could be relied upon so much by the GLC for ‘good industrial relations’. He did nothing for the direct labour building workers in London Transport when they were made redundant despite pleas from Chris Murphy, the DLO Convenor and others and he voted solidly with the Stalinist leadership on Croydon Trades Council. Gibson even refused to support the McCarty and Stones building strike because the funds on the Trades Council (£10?) could be seques- trated.

We had begun to establish contact with the Morenoites following Tom Scott-Robson’s visit to his home country, Argentina, in the Summer of 1986. No particular notice was taken of this, as it was the thing to do in the WRP at the time. Moreno had visited here, but did not go down big with the membership (or Bill Hunter either). Slaughter had visited Argentina soon after Scott-Robson’s visit. The third and final prong of the reactionary alliance was coming into being. They were all to work together in perfection at the April 1987 Congress, a year later, just prior to the process of disintegration beginning. The notes that Sam Cox, a CC member from Willesden, passed to me during the witch-hunt on me then correctly characterised the alliance:

‘The agreement between Moreno + Varga + WRP Central Committee is, ‘You don’t raise questions about our past, and we won’t raise questions about your past”. Anyone who does, e.g. Workers Power, is a threat to both. Hence deliberate avoidance of examining the past (Iraqi CP) with rationalisations that you can understand our past by ... building this international

**Political Opposition Emerges**

I wrote my first opposition document, ‘Sectarianism, Social Democracy and the Consciousness of the Working Class’, in response to the debacle at the TU school and the outright sectarianism that was now being pumped out at the classes in the Duke of York against Workers Power and Thornett and the full blown campaign to defend practically all aspects of our past history as revolutionary. All the features of the ideology forged by Healy to cover up for historical betrayals so strongly rejected by Pirani in that May document had re-emerged in all their virulence.

The position that the middle class and the working class always moved leftwards and that the miners’ strike was just the first in a series of major class struggles about to open up was again reinstated. Of course no one now questions why it did not happen, but the method itself was what was important. As a new programme and perspectives did not replaced the old, ‘all the old crap’ returned to fill the political vacuum.

Never mind what was actually happening or a real analysis of the ebbs and flows in the class struggle and in the mood of the working class; the explosion, objectively determined, is upon us so no time for questions, tactics, transitional demands or patient strug-
gle. Healyism without Healy was back. Tom Kemp supplied the new imminent economic catastrophe/Wall Street crash scenario to back up this nonsense. The major function of this ridiculous rubbish was to force the membership to defend the indefensible, thereby proving that they were the only real Trotskyists left and reinforcing the internal cohesion of the group. I was shocked that this reaction could happen in the space of barely a month and felt this line would be quickly defeated.

The December CC meeting brought out further differences. Pirani here made his big stand against Slaughter on the question of point 7 of the Call for the International Conference. This read ‘Acceptance of the need for revolutionary parties as sections of the Fourth International based upon the principle of democratic centralism’. The argument, which later became far more heated, was that this would exclude sections of the USec, who, while not holding such positions themselves, would be obliged to stay away because of USec discipline. It was a crucial turning point in the WRP. An abandonment of the Open Conference idea signalled that hard political positions were being readopted, without the necessary international conflicts and discussions. The ‘error’ of the 1953 split was being repeated. Nothing was learned from all the re-examinations.

**Staged provocation**

Also, in what I later realised was a staged provocation, a bitter attack was launched on Chris Bailey at this CC for the role he had played in visiting the Northeast area and attempting to sort out a very sharp internal conflict. The basic complaint was that he had listened to the enemies of Hughie Nicol and Dave Temple and wished to effect some type of reconciliation. Bailey was unable to defend himself being in the US, but the affair gave the desired impression that he was getting too big for his boots and he should be taken down a peg or two. Stage two of the counter-attack had begun.

Pirani was still determined to get rid of clause 7. This declared that we should be for the building of Trotskyist parties in all countries to distinguish us from the USec, who had found suitable substitutes in Castro and Ortega. Pirani declared against this attempt to pre-empt the Conference and in favour of a tactical orientation to the USec, whilst not abandoning Trotskyist principles. “If anyone tries to exclude the USec, I will form a faction and fight them on this”, he exclaimed in great anger. Would Pirani be the next to fall from grace? Having declared that these were his principles, he took about four weeks to add. ‘Of course if you don’t like them, I’ll change them.’

The argument about ‘the miners were not defeated’ raged but I got little support the general feeling now being that I was Thornett’s agent. I was offered a sweetener, a free trip to France to discuss with Varga. The expectation was that this would shut me up. It worked for most others, trips to Argentina effecting miraculous conversions to the cause of Morenoism for Slaughter, Hunter and Pirani during the next year.

Chris Bailey went to the US to the Trotskyist Conference in San Francisco in December also and held discussions with a number of Trotskyist organisations at the same time as
Hunter went to Argentina. This Conference, the third of a series, got inspiration from the break-up of the WRP and comprised practically all Trotskyists groups outside the USec.

**Enter Leon Perez**

The two absolutely conflicting reports brought back by Bailey and Hunter had diametrically opposed positions on the LIT. They sparked an enormous row. Bailey had found that Leon Perez, the leader of the IWL, one of the two sections of the Morenoite LIT in the US (4) was universally regarded as a charlatan and a thug by all the other Trotskyist groups, there being a number of reports of him assaulting political opponents. On writing a report on this when he returned, he found the same Leon Perez was ensconced in the office of the WRP, with full access to all internal WRP material, including Bailey’s report to the party on him. Bailey was outraged that his internal report was given to Perez and that few in the party would listen to his account of his trip. Dave Temple asserted that we should not be worried about things that happen “half way around the world” and after a heated discussion Bailey walked out in rage. Any willingness to listen to his report was stifled in the majority of the party and his report was eventually repudiated by the CC.

Cliff Slaughter’s earlier report on Argentina after his Summer visit had been altogether different. It was full of admiration, though he indicated that he feared opposition on some aspects of LIT policy. One area that was difficult, he felt, was the Peoples Front relationship with the Communist party, though he himself was convinced it was really a united front. Why a Trotskyist organisation should call a ‘united front’ a ‘popular front’, considering the history of such alliances did not trouble many WRP members. He could scarcely have expected so easy a ride on this, with only one crank (me) prepared to challenge Moreno’s politics for most of that year and only the Internationalist Faction being prepared to state that they were wrong, and that a year later.

Hunter’s report was an embarrassment, containing no political estimation whatsoever of Moreno’s MAS. He was clearly overcome by the size of it all. Hunter had held up to then that Slaughter was using the relationship with the MAS to avoid developing any British perspectives and was sent to Argentina to see for himself. The effect can only be described as miraculous! The Interregnum was well and truly over.

**Footnotes:**

(1) Varga: Michel Varga (Balzas Nagy). Was the representative of the Hungarian Revolutionary Socialist League on the IC at the time of the split between the OCI and the SLL in 1971. Co-signatory of the split statement with Pierre Lambert and the Bolivian Guillermo Lora in 1971 which defended the Menshevik position of Lora in the failed Bolivian revolution of 1971. He led a split from Lambert in 1972 and split again from the Fourth International (rebuilt) in the 1984 on the basis that Stalinism was not part of the workers movement. He has made no political reassessment of past errors, and remains an unregenerate Lambertist.
Moreno: Argentine ‘Trotskyoid’ (as he termed the ‘Fourth International’ he wished to build) Nahuel Moreno. The Argentine section of the movement he built is the Movement to Socialism (MAS), and the international body is usually known by its Spanish initials, LIT (International Workers League, IWL, in English). He liquidated into the Peronists in the early 1950s but made a ‘left turn’ in the mid 1980s. Few were fooled.

‘Down with the Fraud of the ICFI’ was written by Banda’s main supporter, Dave Good and went through the Conference in February on a close split vote. Pirani voted against it but most leaders supported it. It represented a blatant attempt to bury the past as somebody else’s fault. The spirit of that resolution eventually won in the WRP.

The other section of the LIT in the US is called the International Socialist League (ISL) and is led by Harry Turner. It exists mainly in New York and Los Angles. Turner insists there is no political differences with Perez, he merely objects to the violence Perez used against members, so the LIT agreed to separate the warring factions in 1984.
Chapter 4: Problems of Philosophy

I don’t know what you mean by “glory” Alice said. Humpty-Dumpty smiled contemptuously. ‘Of course you don’t till I tell you. I meant, “There’s a nice knock-down argument for you!”’ ‘But “Glory” doesn’t mean a nice knockdown argument Alice objected. ‘When I use a word,’ Humpty-Dumpty add in a rather scornful tone, ‘it means just what I want it to mean - neither more nor less.’ The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things?’ ‘The question is,’ said Humpty-Dumpty, “which is to be master - that’s all,

Lewis Carroll, Alice Through the Looking Glass, as quoted by Dave Bruce in ‘A Charlatan is Exposed’.

Or how the WRP leadership pleaded with the world not to confuse them with the facts.

This is a difficult chapter on a subject that most Marxists avoid like the plague. The long quotations and detailed analysis that follow are necessary because it is, after all, one of the three component parts of Marxism and serious Trotskyists cannot leave it to be turned into a mystical cult by the likes of the Healyite Marxist party.

Gerry Healy had published his book, Studies in Dialectical Materialism in October 1982. David North, leader of the US Workers League, sympathising section of the IC, produced some notes highly critical of it in the same month, during a visit to London. He also identified substantial areas of the WRP and IC’s political positions which had ‘drifted steadily away from a struggle for Trotskyism’. In his opinion this ‘began in 1976 and only began to predominate in 1978’. He cited the Middle East, Libya, Iran, Zimbabwe and the line on the Malvinas war. This was clearly a substantial political attack, as testified not only by the content of the documents, but also by the sharp tone of his attack on Healy. It can be seen in no other way than a bid for leadership of the IC at that time. These notes were published in October 1985 directly after the split as part of North’s claim for ‘continuity’ i.e. Trotsky’s mantle.

Though he got the backing of Slaughter and Banda in 1982 to fight this ‘drift away from Trotskyism’, they ratted on him as soon as he had left the country. North abandoned his attack when Healy threatened a split. It never got beyond the knowledge of a few IC delegates at the time.

Dave Bruce had written on this subject just before the split and Chris Bailey had written three document, two opposing North’s notes’ on Healy’s book in early January 1986 and towards the end of that year and one attacking the present WRP leadership in December 1988. Just prior to the Hungary Revolution meeting of October 1988 there was an exchange of documents on the question of dialectics between Workers Power and Geoff Pilling, representing the WRP. It is best to take all these documents together to illustrate the problems of philosophy that continues to dog the WRP.

Healy’s Method

North attacked Healy’s book from the angle that Healy was ‘Hegelianizing’ Marxism. He cited a number of instances in the book in which Hegel was lumped together with Marx, Engels and Lenin as the models for the training of revolutionary cadres. He stressed again and again that Healy was ignoring basic materialist positions and the primacy of matter over thought.

Chris Bailey set out to demonstrate that North was counterposing a crude Healyite me-
chanical materialism to Healy’s mystical idealism a few months later. This economic de-
terminism, the unstoppable juggernaut of the world revolution that trundled ever on-
wards, independently of will and consciousness, is basic Healyism, right back to the
1940s. This eliminated the necessity for the revolutionary party to intervene in the class
struggle and provided the rational for the dogmatic, sectarian ideology which saw only
the necessity to keep the doctrine pure until the masses called on Healy to lead the world
revolution. So he could proclaim “I am the world revolution” after the 1985 split. In that
respect North represents pure Healyism.

In fact North did not at all attack Healy’s method, which was totally anti-Marxist and
which was common to all the IC sections and still prevails in the both WRP’s, in the Hea-
lyite Marxist party and in North’s IC. He did not analyse what was the basic method of
Healy’s ‘Studies’ and how it revealed Healy’s true political position and methods of party
control so opposed to democratic centralism and Marxism. Healyism was essentially a
substitution of subjective speculation for a detailed Marxist analysis of objective reality.

Certainly Healy’s book was totally incomprehensible to me as well as to everybody else I
discussed it with pre-split. In fact Torrance once confided in a puzzled student at a Sum-
mer school that only Healy could understand Dialectical Materialism at the present. Since
Healy is now dead that leaves only One (God!) who can understand it, presumably (1). It
was such an enormous relief to discover that the reason I could not understand it was
nothing to do with my own stupidity or even my own ‘class position’, as Healy never
tired of telling everybody who expressed confusion on the subject.

The reason no one understood what Healy wrote was that it was almost total gibberish.
This was what North avoided and what Dave Bruce explained so well in his document. It
is worth noting that all sections of the WRP and IC totally ignored Bruce’s contribution,
undoubtedly because it was perceived as an attack on the entire ideology that guided,
and still guides all these charlatans. North was recommending a study of ‘Studies’ to all
US branches just one month before the split, despite his extremely serious criticisms of the
book three years before.

**Honest Philosophical Debate**

In his twenty three page document *A Charlatan is Exposed*, August 1985, Bruce systemati-
cally takes the first Chapter of ‘Studies’: ‘Subjective Idealism Today’ and demolishes it
totally. In these quotations the male gender is used for humanity as a whole. That is a
product of the fact that this philosophy originated before there was much consciousness
of the double oppression of women or socialist struggle against it. Such terminology
would be unacceptable today from any progressive socialist.

Bruce claims on page one that:

“The book is a fraud. The central tenet of the philosophy is a caricature of subjective ide-
alism with all its vices and none of the virtues of honest philosophical debate. But this is
not the point. We are not dealing with a wrong philosophy, an idealist outlook or even an
eclectic mishmash. We face the degeneration of thought itself, right at the heart of Trot-
skyism”.

It is worth quoting some of this work at length in order to compare it with manifestations
of the same method in WRP leaders before and since. He quotes from Healy’s ‘Studies’:
“Dialectical Materialists get to know the world initially through a process of Cognition”.

He observes:

“Which is to say ‘Dialectical Materialists cognise the world initially through a process of cognition.’ How the rest of unfortunate mankind manages to avoid falling under the first bus to pass their door remains a mystery.

But it is more than a careless slip. If cognition is the province of the dialectical materialist alone, then the cult of infallibility is assured. We can pronounce on any subject we like and how are the rest of humanity - Subjective Idealists to a man jack - to prove us wrong? Leadership is - in the last analysis - answerable to nobody. What criteria establish entry into the hallowed circle of the dialectical materialists? It certainly appears that education is inimical to thought. Take paragraph 3 page 14:

‘The most enthusiastic purveyors of such class filth are, of course, the upper and the lower middle class who are groomed for the job in those schools and universities that make the whole affair seem positively decent and respectable from the stand-point of their grubby individual needs’.

Perhaps if bourgeois culture in any form has little to offer, then maybe the day to day experience of party work selects the chosen few?

‘The very students who are resisting change, by either failing to respond to change or are, indeed, going into further retreat away from a desired change, must produce the knowledge of how change will be made out of their actual practice in resisting change’ (Page 77) Studies’

Engels’ enjoinder to develop the art of thinking in concepts and categories by studying the history of philosophy; Lenin’s insistence that Marx’s great work on dialectics was ‘Capital’ itself and his recommendation to study Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, Mehring; Trotsky’s drawing attention to the importance of studying the first four congresses of the Comintern - none of these rate a mention. Let us leave the newcomer to flounder for a moment and see how the dialectical materialist - so called - undergoes this ‘process of Cognition’.

**Sensation and Concepts: Enter Locke, Hume and the Lads**

Page 3, para. 1, ‘Studies’

‘It (the world) affects the sensory organs, producing sensation in the form of indeterminate mental images. As forms of motion and change of the external world, these images are processed as concepts of phenomena. Upon negation through their dissolution from positive sensation into their abstract negative, they are negated again as the nature of semblance into positive semblance, which is the theory of knowledge of a human being. During this interpenetrating process, the images as thought forms are analysed through the science of thought and reason, which is dialectical logic’

Bruce observes:

‘It is inaccurate to say that sensations are the forms of the motion and change of the external world and are images etc. Sensations are reflections of the world in the organs of sense, processed by the brain to form images. But even to say that they form images is true only in a limited sense. We do not see images but things, a distinction of Spinoza’s to which Ilenkov draws attention (‘Dialectical Logic’ page 38).’
But more important is the phrase, ‘images are processed as concepts of phenomena’, which is simply not the case. A concept is a form, an aspect of cognition: the way in which objects and their attributes are generalised, linked with other dissimilar objects (e.g. both a rose and a pillar-box are red) which have a common substance which serve to organise the plethora of perception. Man for the most part operates with concepts unconsciously - What Engels calls, after Hegel and Kant, understanding, that faculty of thought in which the differences with higher animals are quantative. (See ‘Dialectics of Nature’ p. 222)

The empirical observer argued that concepts developed in the mind of an individual out of his or her experience—the gradual accumulation and analytical abstraction of the datum of sense, images, or as Locke calls them, ideas are the basis on which concepts are formed. The mind of a child is a ‘tabula rasa’, a blank tablet on which nature leaves its mark.

The Rationalists, stressing the role of reason and the ability to conceive of mathematical abstractions, held that concepts could not be developed merely out of experience but were innate or God-given. Hegel, building on Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ showed that, for philosophy, the question was not how concepts developed ontologically, (i.e. in the mind of the individual) but historically in society. He distinguished between psychology and philosophy - and this distinction is crucial for Marxism. The best that can be said of ‘images are processed as concepts of phenomena’ is that it is misunderstood empiricism without the clarity of the empirical philosopher.

The empiricist spoke of ‘experience’, not mere sensation. ‘Experience’ is a broader category, which avoids rather than tackles the distinction between psychology and philosophy, but is nonetheless more profound than mere sensation. Use of phrases such as subjective idealism (just what Kant was not), Kantianism, etc liberally throughout the book cannot obscure that an alchemist view of befuddled phrases conceals a wrong conception of the problem that Kant was trying to solve.

Hegel showed one way out of the problem, arguing that the movement of things could be grasped in the consciousness of man only as a social and historical phenomenon. The contradictions in thought - Kant’s Antimony of Thought - are not the fault of reason but actually reflect the contradictory nature of things: their movement and change. The form of thought is historically conditioned and socially manifest. The distinction is between the mechanisms of thought - studied by psychology and the social history of thought, its concepts and categories, which is the province of philosophy.

Concepts and categories develop not simply in the minds of this or that individual - Dialectical Materialist or mere mortal - but manifest the entire culture of mankind -Spirit. The study of thought is therefore the study of appearance (Phenomena as Kant calls it) of this: truly ‘The phenomenology of Spirit’.

The tracing of the path of cognition - social thought in its historical setting – far from being from the individual to society is, in fact, the other way around. No amount of quasi-Hegelian phrases which pepper “Studies” can hide this crude error. Hegel’s great conception is perpetually confused with the form of thinking and perception of individuals.

The Question of Semblance: Not what it Seems

...Semblance is the illusory side of appearance: things which appear as that which they are not. This small point has occupied the minds of the greatest philosophers for over two millennia: how fortunate that the Dialectical Materialist is so privileged by his ability to
cognise that he does not even have to consider it.

As said above for the empiricist the source of knowledge is experience. Hegel praised them in the small ‘Logic’: From the empiricists came the cry: “Stop roaming in empty abstractions, keep your eyes open, lay hold on man and nature as they are you, enjoy the present moment.” Nobody can deny there is a great deal of truth in these words, what was here and now was a good exchange for the futile other world - for the mirages and chimeras of abstract understanding (page 62).

Bacon argued (The Advancement of Learning’) that the senses are reliable if we trained them, took care to look again and again, not to deceive ourselves etc. But Leibniz and the other rationalists showed that sensation cannot reveal essence. Nobody ever has the same sensation twice, nor do two people ever see the same object in the same way. Everyone knows what a six-sided cube is, but who, without moving, has ever seen more than three sides of a cube? How do we know if the famous stick, half in and half out of the water, is really bent? Only Reason can overcome the unreliability of sensation. If there is harmony between what we see in the world and what is in thought - if there can be knowledge - then this harmony is pre-established by God.

But there is still another aspect to the problem: not just the partial but the illusory nature of appearance. Hegel argued that semblance was not ‘just’ an illusion but was both there and not there, real in one sense and not real in another: objective in both. The stick in the water appears bent, but it is not bent; there is a real cause for the illusion of bending - an essential reason - but this has to be derived. It is not enough to keep looking at the stick or scholastically arguing about phenomena - real knowledge has to be won not just about ‘sticks’ but a range of associated things, such as the refraction of light at a boundary. Lenin clearly grasped this when he said: Semblance is: ‘Nothing, non-existence (i.e. illusion) which exists and being as moment.”

Bruce has amply demonstrated that Healy’s ‘philosophy’ did not approach the insight of the great philosophers of early, progressive bourgeois society into the relationship between humanity and nature or, more correctly, comprehend what was progressive and what was historically limited in their theories of the relation-ship of being (man and nature) and consciousness. He goes on to demonstrate that Healy could not have anything like a correct understanding of Marxism without this insight.

**Being does determine consciousness, but dialectically**

Marxism is abstracted from the understanding that it is culmination of all that was progressive in previous philosophy, but stripped of their mysticism, consequent on the hidden nature of human oppression, and placed on the real foundation of man as part of nature and the dialectical interaction of being and consciousness. Being does determine consciousness, but dialectically.

This understanding was not possible before the appearance on the scene of the working class, as a class, of and for itself. The revolt of the working class in the French city of Lyon in 1835 was when this first occurred, according to Engels. By overthrowing its own oppressors the working class would eventually end all oppression and classes and thereby liberate all humanity.

From page 3, para 6 of ‘Studies’ Bruce quotes:

“...Dialectical Logic takes over and reveals concepts and categories for analysis, thereby activating the science and the theory of knowledge and historical materialism.”
He notes:

‘The cornerstone of materialism is the notion that thought is the reflection of matter in the mind of man. All philosophy grasped that this relationship was more than a ‘mirror’ reflection: the giants of the eighteenth century - Diderot and Rousseau above all - touched on the dialectic of nature and society. Kant placed the contradictory nature of thought fair at the centre of his ‘Critique’. Hegel’s crowning achievement was to show that this dialectic of thought was a reflection of the dialectic of things, which was itself the ‘alienation’ of the Absolute Idea.

What determined the idealistic form of his thought? First, the inability of mechanical materialism to tackle the link between social being and social consciousness and the failed dreams of the Enlightenment, which had promised so much but whose actuality was the French bourgeois regime and the collapse of the Napoleonic empire. Second, the other side of this development - a class which, to end its own oppression, had to end all class oppression - had yet to enter the arena of history.

The material force that lay behind Hegel’s great thought- a class that proved the irrationality of all that was real in the sweeping destruction of the French monarchy -proved for a while to be a break in drawing the conclusions of all that flowed from it. Nonetheless Hegel was an objective idealist, thought did reflect the world: it was the world itself that had an ideal aspect. Why then parody this and say:

‘From synthesis... Dialectical Logic takes over and reveals concepts and categories for analysis’?

Let us see how Engels explains it. In ‘Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy’, he writes as follows: (Chapter IV)

“According to Hegel, dialectics is the self-development of the concept. The absolute concept does not only exist—unknown where from eternity; it is also the living soul of the whole existing world. It develops into itself through all the preliminary stages that are treated in the ‘Logic’ and which are included in it. Then it ‘alienates’ itself by changing into nature, where, without consciousness of itself, disguised as the necessity of nature, it goes through a new development and finally comes to self-consciousness in man.

This self-consciousness then elaborates itself again in history from the crude form until the absolute concept again comes to itself completely in the Hegelian philosophy. According to Hegel, therefore, the dialectical movement apparent in nature and history, that is the causal inter-connections of the progressive movement from the lower to the higher, which asserts itself through all the temporary movements and temporary retrogressions is only a copy of the self-movement of the concept, going on from eternity, no one knows where, but at all events independent of any thinking human brain

This ideological perversion had to be done away with. We comprehend the concept in our heads once more materialistically - as images of real things instead of regarding the real things as images of this or that stage of the absolute concept. Thus dialectics reduces itself to the general laws of motion, both of the external world and of human thought - two sets of laws which are identical in substance, but differ in their expressions in so far as the human mind can express them consciously, while in nature, and up to now for the most part in human history, these laws apply themselves unconsciously, in the form of external necessity, in the midst of an endless series of seeming accidents. Thereby the dialectic of concepts itself became the conscious reflex of the dialectical motion of the real world and thus the dialectic of Hegel was placed upon its head; or rather, turned off its head on which it was standing and placed upon its feet.”
Bruce says:

“Dialectical logic ‘takes over’ nothing at all. It is the study of how the world - matter in motion - is reflected in the minds of men. Hegel was right on this score - when we eat, physiology does not teach us how to digest. We do it. Just as knowing the physiology of digestion can help to make us healthier people, so knowing how the movement of the world is reflected in the development of concepts and categories enable us to better reflect this movement. We can grasp how real truth is reflected, not in ‘concrete facts’ by themselves but in suprasensual abstractions which go away from the concrete precisely to bring us closer to it.”

**Serious Disagreements**

I will end the lengthy extract there and consider Chris Bailey’s contribution.

While Bruce wrote his document, the IC was still intact. Although it was not published until the end of 1985, in Internal Bulletin No. 5, he did note in a foreword that, now that he had seen North’s notes he did not wish to detract from the importance of the issues raised by him (North) but “I (Bruce) have many serious disagreements with what he says.” As the main defender of the WRP’s assets against the legal attacks of Healy and the Redgraves, he did not have the chance to produce the promised assessment of the notes. This task was taken up by Chris Bailey in The Practice of Cognition???, written on 9 January 1986 and subsequently published in Workers Press. He quotes from Healy, writing on an earlier Summer School:

“We emphasised the essence of Leninist materialism by stressing that if ever the student was in doubt, the origins of materialism were always from without, reflected in the form of sensation, whereas the origins of idealism were from within and resulted in thoughts being imposed on the material world, rather than being derived from it.”

Bailey explains:

“Hegel was quite clear on where this starting purely from sense-perception’ led: ‘Besides, this school makes sense-perception the form in which fact is to be apprehended; and in this consists the defect of empiricism. Sense-perception is always individual, etc’”

Bailey, in fact, was expanding on Dave Bruce’s exposure of Healy’s ‘crude error’ and he does so very well in this document. In fact Plekhanov ridicules just this error in the first page of ‘The Role of the Individual in History’. Lawrence and Wishart;

“In the second half of the ‘seventies the late Kablitz wrote an article entitled “The Mind and the Senses as Factors of Progress” in which ... he argued that the senses played the principal role in human progress, and that the mind played only a secondary role, and quite a subordinate one at that ... A certain “esteemed sociologist” replied to Kablitz, expressing amusement and surprise at a theory that placed the mind “on the footboard.” ... Indeed the “factors” theory (the idea that unconnected circumstances and “factors” determine history GD) is unsound in itself, for it arbitrarily picks out different sides of social life, hypostatises them, converts them into forces of a special kind (Healy’s brain, as in “I will the revolution” GD), which, from different sides, and with unequal success, draw the social man along the path of progress. But this theory (that of factors’ GD) is still less sound in the form presented by Kablitz, who converted into special sociological hypostases, not the various sides of the activities of the social man, but the different spheres of the individual mind. This is a veritable Herculean pillar of abstraction; beyond this one can-
not go, for beyond it lies the comic kingdom of utter and obvious absurdity.”

This was the starting point for Plekhanov to analyse the role of the individual. Healy never even made the stalls!

Bailey goes on to say:

‘The ICFI and all of its sections have to confront the fact that “the fight to train the cadres in the practice of cognition’ was nothing more or less than the subordination of the world movement to the personal rule of G Healy. Healy’s practices with the youth and the cadres were not in opposition to the theory which guided the ICFI, but the actual carrying through of this theory into practice...

There can be no compromise with those who seek to avoid confronting the effects of Healyism on the International. The task of developing the perspectives and work of the individual sections, including the WRP, is subordinate to the central task of re-establishing the authority of the ICFL. The reestablishment of the authority of the ICFI can only be done by overcoming the false theoretical foundations on which they are based...

There has been much talk in the WRP and the ICFI about the thread of Trotskyist continuity continuing through our movement. If we simply acknowledge this then, in fact, there is no thread. Those who begin from restoring the continuity of Trotskyism by confronting the extent to which Healy the movement are the thread. Trotskyism first and foremost is about confronting the truth, no matter harsh it might be.”

**Hindsight**

In the light of hindsight these comments should have been given a more careful reading and warning bells should have rung. Bailey was clearly here arguing for a continuity of Trotskyism running through the IC tradition. The difficulty was that North was insisting on continuing of the mindless activism of ‘party building’ separated from the class struggle which left the membership no time or inclination to develop theoretically (he wanted to keep the daily News Line going and regarded the decision to go to a weekly paper as a great betrayal) and so ensure a ‘cadre’ of supine foot-sloggers.

Banda, on the other hand wanted to smash the party up entirely (Tony Banda, Mike’s brother and Janet, Mike’s wife, wanted to salvage some of the property for themselves by holding on to their shares in the party’s companies). Out of all this confusion the above position was understandable, at that time, but it has to be said it was a thoroughly idealist and dangerous position.

It is impossible to postpone the ‘task of developing the perspectives and work of the individual sections’ (indefinitely, as it turned out) and re-establish the authority of the ICFI by overcoming the “false theoretical foundations on which they are based’ alone.

A new party practice had to be established, a theoretical examination had to go hand in hand with the attempt to establish ‘communist relations’ with the working class. It had to be the collective experience of the party, together with the struggle to develop theory as a guide to that practice that educated the party, not North’s ‘Heritage we Defend’ which was only possible free from critical challenge from the membership of the post-explosion WRP not Banda’s nihilism nor the liberal-reactionary, ride-the-storm, bow-to-the-wind ideology of Slaughter. The procrastination on this resulted in the political destruction of many good militants.
Healy understood the need to tie his ‘cadres’ to him by blind activism, and held on to some of his followers because he continued with this activism that was so central to his authority. North also continued this same method. And the old political positions returned in the WRP (Workers Press) because the essential dialectical unity of theory and practice was not grasped. A corrupt theory and practice from Healy and North could not be defeated outside or inside the party by correct theory alone (or by physical violence either, then very much in fashion against the ‘Rump’. There were several assaults on the WRP (News Line) group around this time.)

Some theory and some perspectives had to guide the work in the trade unions (as Thor- nett observed, the idea of members working in trade unions as ‘individual communists’ is a farce) and since the WRP had no perspectives for trade union work, bourgeois theory and adaptation to left bureaucrats was the only method practised. It was this relationship that went unchallenged, and this was to prove the basic political axis in the new WRP. Bailey, however unconsciously, was conceding to that political pressure.

Bailey returned to his theme again in ‘In Defence of Thought’ in ‘Tasks of the Fourth International’, March 1987. He writes:

“North informs us that both historically and in their individual biographies, men ‘get to know the world initially’ through practice. It is the historical development of social practice that gives rise to consciousness and its specific form through which the world is cognised.’ If men ‘get to know the world initially through practice’, why did the historical development of social practice give rise to consciousness at all? This is the same muddle as Healy’s ‘practice of cognition’. Healy makes thought a practice; North makes practice perform the role of thought. In both cases the effect is the same. Thought as a specific activity is destroyed and made indistinguishable from practice.”

Sy Landy, of the US League for the Revolutionary party, was the only one to assess Bailey’s article. His observations, in a letter to Bailey on 29 July 1987 proved prophetic. He has a very rigid understanding of what a class analysis is and complains that Bailey has made no class analysis of Healy. He accuses all Trotskyists (and Trotsky too over Poland, presumably) of abandoning a class analysis by saying that the Stalinists overthrew the property relations in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless he is sharp enough to see real problems with Bailey’s article:

“North is, as you say, an idealist encased in a mechanical materialist world of reductionalism. To prove your point with respect to North, you quote him (p 39) to the effect that ‘As Materialists, we cannot refer to man as a thinking body, because that would reject historical materialism, which insists that the essence of man is not consciousness but labour.’

I note in passing that North’s unbelievable mechanical view cannot show the difference between mankind and beavers... North’s statement literally cries out for an answer as to what is “the essence of man’ since neither of us could possibly accept that ‘it is not consciousness but labour.’ My answer is “conscious labour”. I do not see yours...

I cannot demand that you include all aspects of a question, that is a charlatan approach. However I can say that in leaving the question where you do, you come to an unnecessary stageist conclusion: first study our theory and then practical intervention. This in turn leads to (or reflects) an initially inactive posture or attitude towards revolutionary tasks. The task of philosophers is not to give up study and conceptual work but to link it to practical revolutionary intervention, which is for us, its raison d’être”.

In fact a very uneasy feeling is got from the fact that in the writing of both Bruce and Bai-
ley there is an over-abundance of quotes from Hegel, some from Marx and Engels and far less from Lenin and Trotsky. An independent ‘philosophy’ seemed to be attempted. Surely the point was that both Marx and Engels had demonstrated that philosophy, as a separate science, had been superseded by Marxism, which explains all aspects of the interrelationship between human beings and nature. A development of Marxist philosophy is not possible without developing party perspectives and programme and testing them out in the practice of the class struggle:

‘Philosophers have interpreted the world, the point is to change if, eh?’

“In both aspects materialism is essentially dialectic, and no longer requires the assistance of that sort of philosophy, which, queen-like, pretended to rule the remaining mob of sciences.” (Engels, Socialism, Utopian and Scientific.)

**Workers Power and Geoff Pilling**

This is an assessment of the exchange of documents between Workers Power and Geoff Pilling written in mid 1956. These are some extracts, first from Workers Power:

“Materialist dialectics bound theory and practice together as separate parts of a unified whole. In this sense Marxism signalled the end of philosophy’. Of course defending the philosophical foundations of Marxism’ from the attacks of idealists or anti-dialecticians is vital but this never came to be seen as dialectical materialism as such. Effectively this is what happened with Healy, who turned dialectical materialism into little more than one of its parts, namely, epistemology (the theory of knowledge).

So this was the first mistake: to construct a philosophy of Marxism instead of training party cadre in the use of materialist dialectic in the study of different social, political and historical problems which demand that one come to grips with the specific nature of the subject matter being studied’.

And later on they take Cuba as an example of what they mean:

“Both sides in the dispute over Cuba were guilty of vulgar thought which failed to come to terms with this contradictory phenomenon. For the SWP (US) Hansen said that nationalisations equals the social revolution equals workers state, secondly, since Stalinism is counter-revolutionary, anyone who makes a revolution cannot be a Stalinist. By combining empiricism with formal logic the SWP (US) made a whole series of pragmatic deductions from first principles’.

Against this the SLL under Healy and Slaughter did virtually the same methodologically but with a reverse content. They simply argued that nationalisations, when not carried out by the victorious proletariat in its own soviets can only result in state capitalism. They insisted that Castro was a petty bourgeois nationalist and that, therefore, by definition, Castro’s movement could not overthrow capitalism.

Both sides failed to look concretely at the struggle between workers and bourgeois in Cuba, between the USA and the USSR, the pace of development of nationalisations (i.e. the total expropriation of imperialist and Cuban interests and the planning of production). Whereas their analysis led the SWP (US) to hail any nationalising petty bourgeois regime (e.g. Algeria, Syria, Nicaragua) as a workers and peasants government or even a workers state, Healy and company refused to see an overthrow of capitalism when it hit them between the eyes’.

Pilling could not accept this. He replied:

“They (the SLL’s disputes with the SWP) did attempt to raise the discussion on what seemed to be concrete questions (the nature of the Cuban revolution etc.) to a more universal level and to tackle those philosophical questions of empiricism and pragmatism of which Trotsky spoke with such
deliberate emphasis at the time of the Burnham, Shachtman split. However incomplete this work was, it was attempting to deal with a real problem, the adoption of an entire section of the movement, led by the American SWP, to adapt to a new reality”.

**Theoretical Foundations of Healyism**

This work was not; of course, ‘incomplete’ it was plain wrong. Chris Bailey, in his ‘Theoretical Foundations of Healyism’ correctly describes the position on Cuba thus:

“The failure to make any real development in Marxism with regard to a viable theory on the expropriation of capitalism in Eastern Europe meant that ‘orthodox Trotskyists’ could give no explanation of events in Cuba. Confronted with this some of them did seek to tackle the problem, notable those in opposition in the US SWP. Their work still remains an important starting point for serious work on this question, which still remains to be done. The Socialist Labour League and Healy, however, pressed a different course. They took the incredible rout of denying what had taken place! They claimed that Cuba was still a bourgeois state even though there was no bourgeoisie! The fact that there was hardly any opposition to this position in the SLL shows the degeneration that had taken place. Members were prepared to accept the pronouncements of the leadership even when they clearly contradicted the facts. This is the characteristic of a cult not a revolutionary party.

Having denied the facts in this case, the next step was to proceed to deny facts in general. The world was as G Healy declared it to be! The chief architect in providing a theoretical justification for this, at least in the early stages, was Cliff Slaughter... This (denial of facts in general) was done in the form of a so-called fight against empiricism”.

There is some problem with Bailey’s position on the lack of any viable theory on the expropriation of capitalism in Eastern Europe after the war. The point is that the theories developed were inconsistently applied and abandoned opportunistically whenever short-term gains beckoned. Bailey goes on to prove that Slaughter’s attack on the position of the SWP is even more reactionary than Hansen’s, by its refusal to examine the real world:

‘In his play Galileo’, Brecht graphically illustrates the clash between empiricism and previous philosophy. In one of the scenes of the play, Galileo has a telescope trained on Jupiter. He can actually see that its moons don’t move according to the accepted theory of the time. He asks one of the scholars to observe this. The scholar refuses, explaining in more and more complex language that the observation cannot be correct. Slaughter argues in favour of the man who will not look through the telescope.”

The question of Cuba was finally resolved by the adoption of a document written by Pill- ing. At least I think Pilling wrote this unsigned, undated (May 1987?) document and I suppose it was adopted. I had gotten so disgusted with the rubbish being talked on the subject and I did not check. Anyway this document ‘The WRP and Cuba’ changes the definition of Cuba from a capitalist state to a deformed workers’ state. It says:

“In making this change of definition of Cuba, it is important to be absolutely clear on what is changed in our past position. To be sure the change is not simply one of rebaptising Cuba (no? GD): naming it differently. It recognises a reality in relationships (26 years after the rest of the world GD) it is a step forward in assisting the WRP in facing the theoretical problems arising from the struggle to reorganise the Fourth International. However, it represents no change whatsoever in the political tasks which were posed by this position of the SLL.’
What could you say to that kind of arrogance? ‘So we were wrong in 1963, so what, it was just as good as being right, because facts do not matter, what matters is being for a revolutionary party in Cuba”. Any decent multi-national company would want subsidiaries abroad. Why you were not able to build one is nothing to do with not being able to politically assess the situation in Cuba!

**Little room for Marxism**

But to return to the WRP/WP polemic. Pilling does concede, in his reply to WP that,

We did not make a specific analysis of the Cuban state. We did tend to say that the nature of the Cuban state flowed directly from the nature of the leadership that brought that state into being. There certainly was a failure to consider the Cuban question in the light of the experience of the movement from the end of World War II onwards (Others, including Tim Wohlforth and later John Lister were making efforts in that direction).”

This list of omissions leaves little room for Marxism, one would. But the Workers Power document has one glaring error. It says;

‘In short purposeful labour is the key to our understanding.

And later:

‘The motor force of human history is the conflict between one class which has a monopoly of the decisive means of production and exploits the labour of another class”.

This formulation is repeated by the LRCI (WP international grouping) in the first page of their introduction to their ‘Trotskyist Manifesto, published in 1990 and is obviously central to their ideology. We can imagine that Pilling could hardly believe his luck. He demolished the proposition, and proceeded to expose its political roots. It seems scarcely credible that WP would continue with this position, even formally, after such a mauling.

To quote Pilling:

‘At one point you quote Engels speech at Marx’s graveside: Marx discovered the laws of development of human history:

“The simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing before it can pursue politics, science, art and religion etc.” Immediately after, as an intended gloss, you then say:

‘In short, productive, purposeful labour is the key to our understanding.” (Understanding of what?)

This is plain wrong, though it might pass for good coin in some circles. Whatever else can be deduced from the labour process it most definitely is not the nature of society (and it is about the nature of society that Engels is speaking of at that point in the graveyard speech.) The labour process is common to all societies: in all societies man must procure from nature his food, clothing, shelter and these are undoubtedly the basis elements of life. But this fact can tell us absolutely nothing about why this labour process assumes specific social forms at different points in history and why these social forms (relations of production) are periodically overthrown.

Marx actually starts from quite a different conception: from the social relations of production. It is these relations, not man’s struggle against nature, which constitutes the foundations of society. And as such the production relations furnish the only key to understanding all the other elements of society: its politics, religion art etc.
For if the class struggle, in and of itself, is regarded as the motor of history, is there any necessity for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the’ dictatorship of the proletariat as the prerequisite for communism? There cannot be. Communism is devoid of its historical basis and must tend to be transformed into a utopia. (Such a view of the class struggle, we might add, is also perfectly consistent with syndicalism and rank-and-fileism which, while it might recognise the class struggle and even the irreconcilably of class interests, does not accept the Marxist position on the state and the necessity for its smashing.)"

Get closer to the working class by abandoning more controversial aspects of Trotskyism

To the above analysis of the position of the Workers Power I need to add a little. Workers Power is now much more clearly moving in the direction of syndicalism and rank-and-fileism, still victim of its SWP origins. The quotation from Lenin’s ‘What is To Be Done” to the effect that revolutionary consciousness must be brought into the working class from without by the intervention of the revolutionary party is the most apt here and Pilling’s contribution does not emphasise this aspect sufficiently. The very conception that we must get closer to the working class by abandoning more controversial aspects of Trotskyism, or at least remaining silent on them is a reflection of opportunism and is implicit in the idea that the class struggle is the motor force of history.

Finally in this section, I must note that the SLL/WRP was one of the few organisations calling itself Trotskyist that addressed the question of Dialectical Materialism at all. That it was so perverted by Healy speaks of a very low level of ideological understanding in the working class, surely consequent on the defeats inflicted on the movement by the betrayals of Stalinism and social democracy. That a significant effort was made in the WRP (Workers Press) to rescue Marxism from that perversion, principally by Dave Bruce and Chris Bailey is also true. If that effort failed, due to failure to tackle the pressing political problems of the old leadership, then something was gained. It remains to put those gains into practice, not to admire them as contributions to history.

Footnote:

(1) Robert Browning’s response when questioned on a mystical passage in his poetry:
‘when I wrote that only two people understood it. Now only One of us does.’
Chapter 5: Chauvinism on the Irish Question

“History has turned its backside on these gentlemen and the inscriptions they read there have become their programme. An island position, wealth, success in world politics, all this cemented by Puritanism, the religion of the ‘chosen people’, has turned into an arrogant contempt for everything continental and generally un-British. Britain’s middle classes have been long convinced that the language, science, technology and culture of other nations do not merit study. All this has been completely taken over by the philistines currently heading the Labour party.” (and the WRP too, GD)

Trotsky: Where is Britain Going? (P 39 New Park edition.)

The outright chauvinism of the Labour bureaucracy that the SLL/WRP reflected and displayed towards Ireland had come under increasing pressure from party members during and after the miners’ strike. This was a reflection of the inspiration which this great struggle was to the most oppressed sections of society. Chief among the opponents of the line was Stuart Carter. He pointed out that the documents for first session of the Seventh Congress in October 1984, did not mention Ireland. This was subsequently included in the second session, in December. His stand was most shamefully betrayed by the passive acceptance by everybody of assaults on him by Healy and Banda on the CC as explained earlier.

When Mike Banda wrote his ‘27 Reasons he trawled the world for instances of Trotskyist betrayals yet could not spare one word for the most serious betrayal of all, which indeed revealed the true class character of the Healy organisation and reflected all the other betrayals; the betrayal of the Irish revolution by the British WRP. As the LIT prepared to break from the Preparatory Committee, it accused the WRP of re-adopting the perspectives of national Trotskyism. This was undoubtedly true. The fact that the-LIT defined Internationalism as those who supported them did not take away from a correct observation. Such was the paranoia with security that all Irish recruits were double checked, and refused membership for long periods to discourage them from joining. The disgraceful condemnation of `all IRA actions on the ‘mainland’ and characterising the Brighton bomb as ‘an outrage’ set the scene for a real re-assessment of the previous relationship of the party to Ireland. The chief motivator of this movement after the split was Simon Pirani and soon I and many party members, like Charlie Walsh, a Kilburn branch member with a history of disagreement with the WRP’s position on Ireland, Phil Penn, Lynn Beaton, who was from the Australian section, were involved in the struggle.

Irish Trotskyists

The first contact we made after the split was with a man called Lacy who had a group in Belfast. He was a very unstable character who left the Special Congress on 25 October 1985 to support Torrance declaring that what he was hearing was not “Marxist Terminology”. We then encountered another rival Belfast based group, the Irish Socialist League [ISL] and their leader Felix Quigley during the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising in
Dublin in 1986. Also there we met for the first time one of the comrades from Dublin who were later to found the Irish Workers League in response to the call for an Open International Conference put out by the WRP.

The ISL held a public meeting in Trinity College after the demonstration where we met the Irish Workers Group (IWG) the Workers Power Irish co-thinkers. They were a very serious group and I felt their work on James Connolly, in particular, was very good In most respects but did reflect a tendency towards Legal Marxism’ an over-emphasis on the need to renounce all aspects of the armed struggle as ‘guerillaist’. I attacked them for their refusal to support the line of armed defence of the nationalist community in 1969. They did not see this cowardly abstention from the real physical confrontation with the fascist B-Specials and the Orange state in August 1969 as one of the reasons for the demise of the SLL Belfast group.

Their later position on the Enniskillen bomb in November 1988 confirmed for me that analysis. They concentrated their attack on the IRA and condemning the bombing, thereby joining the hysterical anti-IRA reaction in Ireland. This was too much like the response of the WRP to the Brighton bomb for me. Workers Power, in contrast, correctly defended the IRA in their paper as a prerequisite for their criticism of their methods. However Workers Power did not disown the IWG’s position and after an internal struggle the conflict was fudged by an adaption to the reactionary position of their Irish co-thinkers. We were absolutely overcome to meet Irish Trotskyists, whom we had heard existed but were never allowed to communicate with by the WRP. Quigley had a deep suspicion of Slaughter, with good reason, as I found out later. Unfortunately his response to the split was to side with Banda because he was opening up all the historical questions. He failed to detect the basic Stalinist nature of Banda’s ‘27 Reasons’ and the ISL became the only international group to support him. When Banda denounced Trotskyism, and also by implication Quigley, he was devastated and his group of young comrades broke up.

**Correct Points**

He made some correct points about the initial Eighth Congress resolution on Ireland being too soft on Sinn Fein, but after the previous history of chauvinism it was quite understandable if we bent the stick a little in the other direction. This softness did reflect, however, an important, if less repulsive, part of the IC/WRP tradition, which was unable to find the alternative, Trotskyist, line. The capitulation to petit bourgeois nationalism was the other side of the coin to the previous, and subsequent, sectarianism, based on chauvinism. Little of contention emerged on Ireland that year after the split with Quigley, though Slaughter did indicate some disagreement with my position on the abandonment of abstentionism by Sinn Fein in my report of the 1986 Sinn Fein Ard Fheis.

A delegation from Dublin attended the WRP November Conference and were so outraged at being treated as the ‘Dublin branch’ by Standing Orders that one of their comrades spoke in Gaelic to the to emphasise their opposition to this attitude of patronising
chauvinism. It was the first indication for me that among a section of the members at least a long struggle still lay ahead to overcome this legacy from the past. The Dublin comrades had responded to the call for the International Conference by forming the Irish Workers League. They had been in the leadership of the old IC Workers League and were militant workers’ leaders who were badly burned by the experience, like us all. There was a tendency to over emphasise the opposition to sectarianism over opportunism but this was the general response to freedom from the stifling sectarianism of the old IC.

**Reaction on the Ascendant**

I was elected secretary of the Irish Commission after the March session of the 8th Congress and we felt work was proceeding well during the year with public meetings and involvement in the Guildford Four Campaign and visits to Belfast. Pirani was doing some good work in Scotland and was building up contacts in Ireland, That was bringing the party into the mainstream of Irish solidarity work, though this area was troubled too by the lack of perspective in terms of concrete interventions In the Labour movement, as Nick Davies of the RIL, pointed out in a letter to Workers Press on 31 January, 1987. The third and perhaps most important stage of the attack on the progressive drive of the WRP to redress its reactionary history came on the question of Ireland. It took the form of a sustained assault on my position as Secretary of the Irish Commission.

By the beginning of 1987 reaction was well and truly on the ascendant in the WRP. In early January I had been invited to speak at a three way public meeting on Ireland by the Socialist Organiser and Workers Power. Simon Pirani refused to raise the matter on the Political Committee and Mick Gentleman ‘forgot’ to raise it on the London District Committee, as requested. However the 30 January meeting was advertised in Workers Press for a few weeks prior as a ‘Debate jointly called by Workers Power, Socialist Organiser and Workers Press’. I was then told by Sean Matgamna during the meeting that he had been informed by Dot Gibson, when he phoned the centre, that the WRP was not supporting the meeting. Only two WRP members turned up to a packed meeting of some 150 youth.

I had first come across a rounded estimation of the role of the IC in Ireland from Dermot Whelan’s document, ‘The SLL and Irish Marxism (1959- 1973) – a Disastrous Legacy’, handed out by the SLG outside the June session of the 8th Congress. It has been republished by the Workers News, paper of the WIL, in September 1989. Whelan had been a leading member of the Irish group and details the appalling attitudes of the SLL, in particular Slaughter and Healy, to Ireland. Slaughter’s intervention in the League for a Workers Republic (LWR) in the early 70s is revealed as unprincipled. He organised a secret faction which then split to form the Irish section of the IC rather than engaging in political debate and struggle, as he had been invited to do by the LWR. Whelan spells out in great detail the appalling sectarian methods ‘party building’, divorced from the class struggle, the internal regime of constant crisis and the constant factional manoeuvring of Healy and Slaughter.
Letters from Brian Pearce and Cliff Slaughter

The initial vehicle for the onslaught was the despicable Brian Pearce, an ex-member, famous translator from the Russian Trotsky’s works and one of the ‘old boy network’ of Pilling Slaughter and Peter Fryer (the first Editor of The Newsletter and a radical author), most of whom had joined from the CP in the late fifties.

He had the racist, ‘Boys with the rosaries and armalites’ letter, sneering at the IRA and glorifying William of Orange printed in Workers Press on 17 January: “It appears that some members of the Workers Revolutionary party are opposed to celebrating the events of 1688 in England because this might give offence to the boys with the rosaries and armalites... Thanks to the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688 we had the agricultural revolution. The industrial revolution, the modern proletariat, trade unionism, Chartism and the whole 19th am 20th century development of the British labour movement ... Nobody, I’m sure, in the WRP would be against celebrating the English revolution of the 1640s and 1650s. Yet, of course, James II, backed by Louis XIV of France, raised troops among the Irish Catholics to carry through his counter-revolution. If they were defeated at the battle of the Boyne, was that such a bad thing from the stand point of world history?”

This was an appalling racist and chauvinist diatribe. Perhaps US Trotskyists should celebrate the defeat of the Red Indian Nation at the battle of Wounded Knee or South African Trotskyist celebrate the defeat of the African tribes in the Zulu Wars - from the stand-point of world history? It drew a strong reaction from many WRP members.

This document by Whelan was never discussed in the WRP and leaders made strenuous efforts at preventing members obtaining it when the SLG handed it out. I also obtained copies of The Newsletter, the SLL newspaper. Those from August 1969 where the political line of the SLL on Ireland was spelled out, were particularly devastating. I was therefore in possession of quite extensive details of what the SLL/WRP was up to in Ireland in the past.

It was just as well because Slaughter pressed home the counter attack in Workers Press of 24 January under the nom-de-plume of ‘J Upward’: “...One feature of Cde Downing’s article (I had written a review of David Reed’s ‘Ireland, the Key to the British Revolution’) puzzles me. From the Popular Front and the Civil War in Spain, he leaps 33 years to 1969-1970. What about the role of the IRA in the intervening years? How did the bourgeois nationalist movement confront World War II and the struggles of the post-war periods? (Brian Pearce was soon to give us the answer to that. Treason! GD) ...Comrade Downing tells us that the ‘excellent’ Reed makes biting comments on the role of the British middle class left (including the Socialist Labour League, Workers Revolutionary party under Healy). I believe Gerry Downing is member of the Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary party. Has he discussed and found agreement in that Committee that the SLL/WRP was part of the British middleclass left or is he making this attack as an individual in the columns of the WRP’s paper? I defy him to show how the policies of the SLL on Ireland or on any other question were ‘middle class’.
In 1969 the Workers Press, in front page lead articles, in editorials, in features and reports written by several comrades who went to the North and participated in the struggles, stood alone in fighting for the withdrawal of Brutish troops, (This is an old Ile. Both the Militant and the IMG opposed the sending in of troops and called for their withdrawal, as did the USec.GD) while the middle class left, including the Socialist Workers party, welcomed those troops in as the ‘lesser evil’. In the years between 1975 and 1985 Healy’s policy of avoiding any clash with the British state produced the reactionary line in the WRP of outright condemnation of the IRA bomb attacks in Britain. That was a manifestation of the way Healy’s regime introduced middle class politics into a proletarian organisation, the SLL/WRP.

In 1985 the process of degeneration involved in that was arrested and Healy and his allies defeated by the WRP. This dialectic Downing ignores preferring simply the label ‘British middle class’. He thereby slanders the work of hundreds of comrades who fought to build the proletarian revolutionary party (foremost of these was C Slaughter, no doubt, GD) always against that ‘British middle class left’. That light eventually had to be fought inside the WRP, against Healy, Redgrave and company. And we won. Don’t forget that”.

The Post Script to the letter was even more disgraceful:

“PS. The caption under a photograph accompanying Cde Downing’s article says: ‘Many of the heat lighters of the Communist party perished in the Republican side in the Spanish Civil war. This group includes Frank Ryan. This may lead some readers to think Frank Ryan was killed in Spain. So far as I know he was taken prisoner and then taken to Germany. Perhaps Comrade Downing can tell us what happened to him subsequently?’

This said in effect: ‘and wasn’t Frank Ryan a Nazi collaborator? This was a British Imperialist inspired smear against Ryan, a leading IRA activist and Socialist Republican. Captured in Spain, fighting for the Republic, he was spared the firing squad and died in Germany of his wounds and of TB. It was, of course, quite correct to seek arms from Hitler to fight British Imperialism. This, together with the question on what the IRA had been up to during World War II, revealed the pro-imperialist attitude of Slaughter, which is that of the English middle classes. It cannot be a coincidence what was hinted at so broadly by Slaughter in this letter was spelled out so explicitly by Pearce in the issue of the paper where my reply to the ‘J Upward’ letter also appeared, two weeks later on 7 February.

Replies to white Anglo Saxon protestant supremacism

I had not only been appalled at the WRP’s chauvinism towards Ireland, so clearly repealed after the split, but also at my own political cowardice in not fighting it. I vowed to myself that, as a Trotskyist and an Irishman, I would never again tolerate that chauvinism masquerading under the guise of Marxism or Trotskyism or in any other form. In the next issue, 24 January, I replied with a letter attacking the basic racism of Pearce:
“Yes, I’m sure the WRP would be against celebrating the Cromwellian revolution of the 1640s and 1650s despite its great progressive nature. Cromwell may have cut the head off Charles I to popular acclaim but his butchery of the Irish nation and his suppression of the Diggers and Levellers (the left wing of his army confirmed the bourgeois nature of the new order... History has transformed Puritanism from the revolutionary bourgeois ideology of the 17th century into the racist, fascist expression of white Anglo Saxon Protestant supremacy from the north of Ireland to the Southern States of the USA to South Africa. It is sad to see a former Trotskyist, who has obviously become totally alienated from the struggles of working class people, giving credence. Even “from the stand-point of world history” to so repressive an ideology”

In the same issue Brian Dempsey, from Scotland, also attracted Pearce:

“If Pearce wishes to contribute to our developing understanding of Irish issues and is concerned about the relationship between religion and the class struggle he should prepare a sober contribution on the subject. If, however, all he can do is produce cynical and bigoted remarks he would do well to keep them to himself”

Simon Pirani, too, joined the attack, though respectfully:

“We don’t need a fine Marxist scholar like Brian Pearce to tell us that the English bourgeois revolution was a great step forward for history... I never heard of anyone celebrating 1688, but every 12 July tens of thousands of Orangemen celebrate 1690. Does Brian Pearce think it strange that WRP members don’t participate?”

In Workers Press, 31 January Aine Devlin’s reply to Pearce was short and sweet:

“If Brian Pearce ever wants to visit Ireland we can fix it up for him to meet some people without rosaries”

Now, however, the issue was no longer Pearce but the reactionary letter from Slaughter. Not everybody knew, of course, that Upward was Slaughter. My reply was published on 7 February:

“...In the Newsletter in 1965 an article from ‘a Dublin correspondent’ stated: ‘Nationalism is as poisonous to the Irish working class as racism is to the British working class... in issue 676 (15 August 1969) ‘our own correspondent’ wrote the lead article: ‘Spectre of Unity in Belfast Riots’ about what could happen if Catholic and Protestant workers united. But in issue 677, August 19, it had already happened. A lead story by David Maude reported that: “defence guards had been formed in the majority of Belfast districts and estates following Thursday’s bitter street fighting”. Similar moves involving both Catholic and Protestant workers are underway in Londonderry (sic). On Belfast’s Grosvenor Road tonight Republican elements (sic) tried to order Protestant families out of their homes... Workers quickly formed a mutual defence patrol”

I can only say that no one else in the world noticed this. Whilst calling to “to withdraw troops from Northern Ireland (sic) now” and “Unity of Catholic and Protestant workers” issues 676, 677 and 678 put the perspective for the Irish Revolution: “For a Workers and
Farmers Government breaking with Westminster posing unity of action immediately with the workers of the South (sic) and of Britain”.

No doubt about what that means: a ‘two nations’ theory, under which a withdrawal of British troops would leave the Orange Order in control. As there was not even a call for the disbanding of the B-Specials (the Orange Order fascist reserve force then murdering and burning Nationalist homes at will, GD) it was clearly a Watkerite appeal to Protestant prejudices against nationalism - the ‘pure class’ line so brilliantly demolished by James Connolly in the ‘Connolly-Walker controversy. This chauvinist position was detailed by Dermot Whelan in: The SLL and Irish Marxism 1959-1973: A Disastrous Legacy. Together with branches in Belfast and Londonderry (sic)] we had a Dublin branch fighting to bring down the Tories. No amount of struggle and self-sacrifice, most of it ‘party building’ abstract from the real class struggle could save the Irish movement from extinction in the face of such wrong policies.”

**Pearce warms to his task**

In that same Workers Press of 7 February Pearce now warmed to his task. Taking his cue from Slaughter, in a letter entitled, ‘The IRA and the Nazis’ Pearce let it all spew out. This is just some of it:

“I was in the North as a soldier for a whole year during what was called in the Republic ‘The Emergency’. (An Interesting period that was. We could listen into Radio Athlone’s news bulletins. From North Africa they read both sides communiqués - the German came first, of course). From the Eastern Front they read only the German communiqués: no platform for atheistic communism. In the Summer of 1942 it became known that the Nazis were planning to invade the Republic in order to be able to invade Britain from that direction.

At that time the IRA became hyperactive in the North, trying to steal arms and money, to commit acts of sabotage and above all to collect military information on behalf of the German Embassy in Dublin. (These were obviously dastardly acts of high treason to the British Empire, in Pearce’s view, GD). I said to one of their lads who had been caught on the job: ‘You people are always talking about freedom. How can you bring yourselves to help the Nazis who would enslave the world if they could? He replied, ‘England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity. In any conflict we take the side opposed to England. To which my rejoinder was ‘But isn’t that, in effect, letting England determine your policy? At which he gave me one of those ‘The English will never understand’ smiles before being led away.’

In fact the Dublin government fully co-operated with the British war machine in secret. If they remained publicly neutral it was because it was politically impossible to get the mass of Irish people to support Britain during the war while the six north eastern counties were occupied. Official papers released in January 1991 revealed what really happened. This is the Guardian report by Joe Joyce on 3 January:
“The Irish government passed information about German craft and submarines to Britain during the second world war in spite of its policy of neutrality according to official papers released by the national archive in Dublin yesterday. A foreign ministry memo dated May 1941 listed 13 ways in which Britain was being helped to wage war. The extent of operation surpasses what had been known already including joint planning between the British and Irish armies to counter a German invasion. So we are left with a simple racist diatribe from Pearce and (backward?) nationalists who would not submit to British imperialism. Even Churchill knew that to have any chance of getting the south to join the war you had to offer a united Ireland. If De Valera refused it was because he did not trust the word of Perfidious Albion. All this reveals Pearce’s attitude to Ireland; somewhere to the right of Churchill’s.

He (the IRA man ‘led away’) then got a good kicking, presumably, if he was not actually done to death, as is the good old tradition in the British army when dealing with Irish rebels. The sole objection raised by Pilling, the editor, to this drivel in a note at the end of the letter was to mention that the Workers Press does not use the name ‘Londonderry’ in normal circumstances (as Pearce did later in his letter).

In a letter in the same issue, Geoff Barr, from Exeter, solidarised with the anti Pearce letters and pointed out that the National Front were the main organisers of the 1988 celebration of King Billy’s landing in the West Country in 1688. In the Issue of 21 February Dave Bruce weighed against Pete Fryer and ‘P Upward’ for their arrogance to members (Nora Wilde, Richard Goldstein and me) and defended our rights to our views:

“For example Cde Downing was attacked in a recent letter from J Upward (he might adopt the nom-de-plume of Step Sideways) because he called the policies of the SLL on Ireland ‘middle class’. I chanced to read that letter at the same time as I read Cde Sara Hannnigan’s account of how Mickey Devine left the SLL because of its chauvinist line on Ireland only to die later in the 1981 Hunger Strikes. He also attacked Fryer for abusing his ‘Personal Column to attack Richard Goldstein and Norah Wilde.

Norah Wilde defended my democratic rights too in that issue and pointed out that ‘Upward’ was attempting to halt all re-examination: ‘Since October 1985, freed from bureaucratic repression Workers Press and the WRP through its internal and public discussions have deepened and clarified our understanding of the past, another dialectic with which J Upward appears to b unfamiliar.”

Barrage of Letters

Frank Fitzmaurice from Liverpool also denounced Pearce’s chauvinism. But Pearce was given two more bites at the cherry. On 14 March we had from him: “... As for the matter of Londonderry you may prefer ‘Derry’ (why not, though, go all the way and write ‘Doire’) but it would have been ridiculous for me to avoid the form ‘Londonderry’ in the context of what I wrote. It was mainly owing to the Ulster Protestants that we were able to use the base in World War II, and they prefer the longer name. In saying which I do not forget the contribution to the crushing of Nazi Germany made by Irish Catholics from both sides
of the Border, who volunteered to join the British armed forces regardless of the attitude of the government in Dublin - sorry Baile Ath Cliath. (Does not this sound like something you would hear from the Queen? GD). If Northern Ireland were to be annexed to the Republic this would mean that the majority community in the North would have imposed upon them not only the ideology of the Roman Catholic Church but also something which is alien to their culture, namely the Irish language.”

Pearce can hardly have been ignorant of the fact that Derry returned a unionist majority at every election despite the fact that some 70% of the population were nationalist”. Never mind what they wanted to call their own city. What’s a little gerrymandering among friends eh?

This drew a barrage of letters from members. Sue Gwyer, Simon Pirani, Geoff Barr and Charlie Pottins attacked Pearce’s chauvinism in the next issue (2 March). But some members did not wish to leave it at the level of attacking Pearce. On 4 April Paddy Winters, from the North London branch, attacked Pearce and also the decision of the Editor, Pilling, to publish these letters: “It is ironic that at this time, with talk of internationalism the party in Britain would impede the possible progress of our Irish comrades, for such letters as those written by Pearce will certainly have such an effect. The ideas inherent in these letters, and by association the act of publishing them, come directly from a class position: they come from a petty bourgeois fear and hatred of oppressed peoples in struggle, which brings with it a philosophical bankruptcy. Only a charlatan would still hold to the backward ideas expounded in B Pearce’s writings. I feel that those who allow such garbage to be printed today will - philosophically speaking- have to sweep it up tomorrow or he buried by it”.

Pilling is Smoked Out

That smoked Pilling out. In a footnote to Winter’s letter he says: · “Whatever our disagreements with Brian Pearce the stand-point of the above (unsigned) letter. (Winters had forgotten to sign the letter but quickly made it known that he was the author GD) must be rejected. Pearce has raised some issues of great importance for Marxism issues which are not settled by abuse. If Pearce’s letters stir some comrades into sending contributions which tackle these problems that would be splendid – Editor.”

You could, of course, say that about Mein Kampf.

David Gorman from Liverpool, on 18 April wrote:

“Cliff Slaughter has claimed that what North described as a nationalist and opportunist tendency was arrested and driven out of the party with the expulsion of Healy in October 1985. The privileged position granted to Pearce’s odious national socialism in the letter pages of Workers Press raises a question mark.”

Charlie Walsh also made clear, in a letter in that issue, that he totally supported Winters’ criticism of the Workers Press for publishing the letters. But the Paddy baiting was now
reaching a climax. Again Pearce appeared in print in the very same issue of 18 April and spewed out yet more reaction. This letter contained three themes:

(1) Support for Loyalists reaction in the north of Ireland and opposition to Irish unity:
“Liberation is the work of the masses; it is not possible against them, writes Geoff Barr. Well the masses to Northern Ireland are predominantly Protestant, and strongly adverse to the aims of the IRA. What conclusion are we to draw from that fact? Perhaps they are not masses at all, but - wait for it - settlers’ (settlers still after 300 years and more)?”

(2) Support for the partition of India by British Imperialism and

(3) Condemnation of British war-time Trotskyists for sabotaging the ‘war effort’ by promoting strikes: “It was disgraceful of the Stalinists to call them (the Trotskyists) agents Hitler but might not Hitler have said about them: ‘with enemies like these who needs friends’?”

Finally, the following week, 25 April, Pilling was forced to call a halt. But the basis on which the Editorial Board did so made it clear that they had no regrets for the outrageous insults offered to Irish people and to principled Trotskyists:

“... In its apparent defence of the partition of India, and its suggestion that Trotskyist opposition to Imperialism in the last war helped Nazism we think the letter went beyond the bounds of socialist controversy. We do not regret our publication of Pearce’s previous letters. However much we may disagree with his position on Ireland Pearce raised a series of important issues. We feel in some cases these were answered with mere abuse. On further consideration, however, we think that last week’s contribution should not have been published. Workers Press Editorial Board”.

That was the end of the affair, apart from a letter of support for Pearce and Pilling from another of the academics, lecturer Terry Brotherstone from Edinburgh. He referred approvingly to: “Pearce’s provocative and stimulating letters”. Both the Editorial Board statement and Brotherstone’s letters summed up for me the whole rotten essence of the WRP. They said, in effect, “What’s up with you blokes, what’s wrong with a bit of Paddy bashing anyway?” When Pearce started insulting war-time British Trotskyists and supporting the partition of India he had gone “beyond the bounds of socialist controversy”. He was, of course, free to use the pages of Workers Press and later the pages of ‘Marxist Forum’, the journal of the WRP’s loyal(ist) Irish co-thinkers, to support the partition of Ireland and spew out chauvinism towards the war-time IRA and racist insults at the Irish as long as he wished. The message to any principled internationalist could not be mis-taken: either swallow this crap or get lost.

The Workers Republic was the publication of the Irish Workers-Group in 1967. The struggle for Trotskyism in Ireland was cynically betrayed by Healy and Slaughter, Slaughter’s intervention in the IWG was thoroughly dishonest. It involved forming a secret faction whilst pretending to have discussions with the leadership. The purpose was to set up a client Irish section of the ICFI to get an extra vote when it split in 1971. The British SLL and the French OCI were the main opponents in the split.
Chapter 6: Break with the Irish Workers League

The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and that changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating. Hence this doctrine necessarily arrived at dividing society into two parts of which one is superior to society (in Robert Owen, for example). The coincidence of changing circumstances and of human activity can be rationally understood as revolutionary practice.”

Marx, Theses on Feuerbach.

Or how Cliff Slaughter rationalised reactionary Loyalism as ‘objectively anti-capitalist’ (revolutionary) with the old Healyite ideology; objectivism based on crude mechanical materialism.

As part of a further turn of the screw on the Irish question, Cliff Slaughter had an article from the Workers Press of October 1969 reprinted in Workers Press in May 1987. There were at least two replies, none of which were published. Slaughter wrote it to justify his own role on Ireland. Stuart Carter had a piece in Internal Bulletin No. 27 objecting to these articles.

The fact that no public criticism was allowed of this appalling article signified to what extent a clique leadership was now imposing a new position on Ireland over the heads of the membership. As Norah Wilde had pointed out in her letter to the Workers Press of 21 February, Slaughter had no more right to claim the WRP’s policy on Ireland was not middle class than I had to claim it was as no committee had decided on this issue. Two double-page spreads with no replies permitted, not even from the Secretary of the Irish Commission was how the issue was decided.

One of the letters was from Bill Stevens in Australia. It tackled the way Slaughter blamed all the past errors on Healy in the foreword he had written for the reprinted article. It analysed what ideologically lay behind this. The other letter was from me and it is dated 4 June 1987. This is the full text:

On Slaughter’s ‘Incorrect Things’

The two double page spreads by Cliff Slaughter on 16 and 23 May set out to prove that the politics of the SLL/WRP degenerated in the 1970s and 80s due to Healy’s ‘more and more one man leadership’ when we began to condemn the IRA for ‘bombings and other actions’. Is this not a ‘cult of the individual’ theory as used by Khrushchev to cover up his own actions under Stalin? However up to 1972 and the Workers Press, ‘We condemn the Bombings’ response to the bombing of the Aldershot barracks (the IMG had the courage to identify it as a legitimate military target in the wake of ‘Bloody Sunday’) things were OK, apart from a few ‘incorrect things’, minor peccadilloes excusable in a Trotskyist organisation under the pressure of capitalist ideology.
The only ‘incorrect thing’ discovered is the slogan ‘For a Workers’ and Farmers’ government, breaking with constitution (sic) (this should read ‘Westminster’ presumably) pos- ing unity of action immediately with workers of the South and with Britain. In the present situation such a fight would have the support of workers throughout Britain (?) who would make impossible the intervention of the hated Wilson.’

Just how wrong this is, is barely analysed. It gives the political parameters for the whole outlook of the party. It legitimises the partition of Ireland and therefore perpetuated imperialist rule, on Slaughters own admission (I). This apparently ‘is not a capitulation to imperialism’

Is this some form of doublethink? You could scarcely get a more incorrect position. A few minor observations on the slogan. Why breaking from Westminster and not Britain? Is this a weasel formulation to hide the real intention? Why is it deemed necessary to win support of workers throughout Britain and only ‘pose unity’ with workers in the South? Was the mobilisation, on a revolutionary programme, of Irish workers of such low priority that they must rely on British workers to win their struggles for them? They would be waiting still.

All the later positions of the party arc present in the two articles and some positions are worse. At least in later years we formally acknowledged the right of Ireland to self-determination due to the struggles of the IRA and the nationalist community. We could hardly have a pro-imperialist attitude on all issues and still claim to be ‘Trotskyists.

This raises a question for Slaughter. You admit you said incorrect things to cover up for the real path of the party between 1970 and 1985, at least. Are you doing the same now by reprinting these articles? Does this not characterise a centrist organisation and method? The policies of the SLL/WRP had a real effect on the struggle in Ireland as we had large forces on the ground on occasions. With a correct programme we could have built a Marxist party. But the vacillations and downright reactionary politics acted as a block on the building of such a leadership. The patronising capitulation to Orangism ensured that there would be no unity of Catholic and Protestant workers, the role now played by the ‘Militant’. This is centrism that can point to ‘correct things’ to cover up for ‘incorrect things’ and learn nothing from our history. Thus did Trotsky characterise the role of the POUM in the Spanish Civil War.

I must take issue with the ‘false conception’ theory that in the 70s and 80s the building of the party in Britain took precedence and that the taking of power could come first in Britain and then the International could be built in other countries. From seeking to deny the party’s pro-imperialist positions pre-1970. Slaughter now defends Healy’s later positions. Marxists never proceed from ‘false conceptions’ to explain a chauvinist policy. What we are dealing with is the pro-imperialist prejudices of the British Labour aristocracy. This is why the articles have such a pro-found Orange flavour. Their basis is the booty of Empire, buying the allegiance of skilled workers and their representatives, the labour and trade union leaders. Orangism rests on the same corrupt relationship. Hence the ‘British socialist’- Orange block.
The Connolly-Walker debates brought out this relationship. Walker held that he was the real socialist, working to develop Belfast Corporation’s services to the poor as against Connolly, who was dividing the Irish working class, and Irish workers from British workers by seeking to build a separate socialist party in Ireland. Connolly was a nationalist because he was opposed to branches of the British Social Democratic Federation in Ireland and was therefore anti-internationalist (remember the SLL branches of Dublin, Belfast and Londonderry). Healy was a Walker clone - his entire political career and Slaughter’s articles are true to this tradition.

I have already pointed out many of these ‘errors’ in a letter to Workers Press in reply to S Upward. As Upward has fallen strangely silent on these matters, perhaps Slaughter could take up the cudgels on his behalf besides reprinting his old articles with ‘incorrect things’, of which he mentions only one. Are there more?

Take the ‘best’ passage:

“Simon pure reformers and so-called socialists will object, of course, that those Protestant workers clashed with the troops preventing them from fighting the Catholic workers. This is, of course, what happened. But the objective logic of events expressed in these attacks was that these workers (the loyalists) have been led to express their bitterness and frustration as victims of exploitation, unemployment and bad housing by taking it out on their class brothers, the Catholics...etc.”

Us Marxists, of course, don’t have the problem of ‘Simon purists’, we must take no notice of what happened and, in place of political struggle, advance ‘objective logic’ and an argument that would equally serve as an apology for Hitler’s Brownshirts. After all they were only taking out their ‘frustrations’ on the Jews and the communists. So perhaps the Nationalist community will be able to console themselves that they are being murdered by bullets from Loyalists that are subjectively counter-revolutionary but their ‘objective logic’ is revolutionary?

Apart from other errors (what Civil War in 1918?) both articles have a partitionist outlook. The maintenance electrician’s strike in 1968-69 was one of the bitterest trade union disputes in the history of the state. It ended in victory. Marxists distinguish between victory and defeat, even in trade unions. This was part of, and greatly contributed to a great working class upsurge throughout Ireland, inspired by May-June 1968 in France and the American Civil rights movement. Both these came together in the pre-revolutionary situation of August 1969. Political developments recognised no border, even if the SLL did. The Dublin working class was in ferment with the Dublin Housing Action Committee etc. and demonstrations almost every night. Jack Lynch sent troops to the border when the assault on West Belfast began and half the Cabinet were later sacked, accused of gunrunning for the IRA (including the present premier, Charles Haughey)

To counterpose a utopian unity, then, against the real forces of revolution was to oppose the revolution itself. Similarly ‘Marxism’ was counterposed to the Civil Rights Movement. Strangely we did not take this sectarian attitude to the American Civil Rights Movement.
So withdraw troops to leave a reformed Orange bastard statelet was the worst of all positions and this must be acknowledged if past errors are to be overcome. When Slaughter says: “The heritage of British imperialism ... ruled out a capitalist solution”, I must point out that there is always a capitalist solution to every capitalist crisis, even if it is a ‘final solution’. This objectivism is a cover up for capitulation to Imperialism.

Gerry Downing”

**Examine the Real Record of the SLL on Ireland**

Carter’s article In the Internal Bulletin also denied that the SLL capitulated to British Imperialism but then says:

“Their (Slaughter’s articles) publication, and the way they are introduced show that those responsible for their appearance do not take seriously the responsibilities of Trotskyists on Ireland. If they did they would want to examine the real record of the SLL on Ireland rather than reprint a few newspaper articles in a point scoring exercise.”

Carter then goes on to further disapprove of the present methods and, drawing at length from Dermot Whelan’s document already referred to, proceeds to expose many of the worst features of the SLL/WRP record on Ireland. He thereby proves that they did capitulate to something. Since he has ruled out imperialism, to what did they capitulate? There is an element of farce involved in exposing to people their own past crimes, that they are so desperate to cover up, in the expectation that you will force them to reform, if you intend to do nothing further about it. Interestingly the present IC under North uncritically defends Slaughter and the pre 1970 record of the SLL in Ireland, whilst criticising the later crimes of the WRP.

Stuart Carter presented a number of amendments to Pirani’s ‘Draft Resolution for Discussion on Ireland’ at the Ninth Congress which removed some of the more objectionable formulations and ideas (including some that I objected to) and reasserted the idea of Ireland as an oppressed nation. However he was very careful not to rock the boat too much, and never indicated any direct support for my stand on Ireland or for the IWL.

An this throws a new light on the big gains supposedly made by Healy after 1956 from the CP. Obviously these recruits, Slaughter, Pearce etc. bringing with them all the liberal reactionary and chauvinist views of Stalinism, were never challenged on them before and have never overcome them. It was also significant that not one of the leading trade unionists (Bevan, Temple, Gibson, Simmance, Handyside, Leicester etc.) in the party was moved to repudiate Pearce’s views publicly or privately.

Slaughter had made his point. He and Pilling could produce any right-wing positions they liked and get away with it. Reaction was resurgent in the WRP and was sweeping all in its path. Just to prove that no real slur was intended on Pearce’s revolutionary credentials, he is now (1991) reinstated in WRP favour. The whole episode, of course, rendered relations with the IWL almost untenable, as Paddy Winters had predicted.
I failed to get the position overturned in the next congress in April. Mick Gentleman, of Standing Orders, promised me that I would get a chance to speak on my motion to congress which said:

‘This congress condemns as chauvinist, pro-imperialist and anti-Irish racism the three letters (four, in fact. GD) from Brian Pearce beginning 17-1-87. It instructs the Workers Press to cease publishing these diatribes which have slandered Irish people as ‘the boys (l) with the rosaries and Armalites’, have supported British Imperialism against the IRA, opposed the re-unification of Ireland on the grounds of the inferiority of southern Catholics and given political support to reactionary Loyalism. This congress apologises to Irish people and to the fighters for national liberation in Ireland, undertakes not to publish such material in future and instructs the Workers Press to publish this resolution’.

It was manoeuvred off the agenda, with no opposition from anyone but me. It was then referred to the CC for decision. The CC postponed discussing it for several months and eventually voted it down with only three votes against. They never made any statement on the Pearce letters. This determined, without any need for detailed perspectives, what the political orientation of the WRP would be in future to Ireland and the nature of any future Irish co-thinkers.

Around this time too the Guildford Four campaign ran into difficulty, with the relatives splitting to form a right wing appeal to the establishment which required to dropping of the left wingers of the WRP and the RCG, who had set up and done all the work in the campaign up to then. Phil Penn announced after that that he would no longer be giving this work priority. The RCG had no difficulty in seeing the drift of the WRP and told us we were gong back to the old Healyite ways.

**Draft Resolution**

Pirani then produced his ‘Draft Resolution for Discussion on Ireland’ pandering to that re-emerging chauvinism. It drew an Inward howl of rage from me. I never felt so politically betrayed in my life and I set about exposing Pirani’s positions.

The arguments are all in the documents, though I would not now agree with some of the positions I took then in my haste to deal a blow at Pirani’s treachery. It was wrong to say that Sinn Fein are the left wing of the bourgeoisie. They are, in fact, a petty bourgeois nationalist force. However the main political point of my argument is correct. The obligation on Marxists is to support Ireland’s right to self-determination. This includes material support for the Irish bourgeoisie in its conflicts with British imperialism, though not political endorsement, of course. Pirani’s attempt to prove that there was no longer a basis for conflict between the Irish bourgeoisie and British Imperialism, due to the capitalist development of Ireland, is a justification of his abandoning that duty.

Sinn Fein cannot, of course, have an independent non-class position, there is no third road for the revolution and they would become a capitalist government on assuming power A Cuba solution is out of the question in Ireland.
**Objectivism**

Surely not accidentally, the argument opened on the objectivity of the struggles of the working class. The WRP’s resolution, written by Pirani, reads:

“"The struggles of the last 18 years in the north of Ireland have been fought around nationalist questions and on nationalist issues but are objectively part of the straggle of the International working class for socialism.”

This was a very dangerous formulation, given the history of the IC on this question, where Gadaffi, Saddam Hussein, Khomeini and Ho Chi Min were supported, uncritically, as the objective forces of the unfolding world revolution, and the executions of Trotskyists and other people who professed to be socialists was defended. Surely it is a one sided and fundamentally un-dialectical view which has enormously reactionary consequences if taken to its logical conclusion. Cliff Slaughter went very far down this road in his 1969 article on Ireland and in his debate on Cuba with the US SWP, as Chris Bailey pointed out in his Theoretical Foundations of Healyism’, discussed in chapter four.

As I wrote in my document, ‘Ireland: Revolutionary Socialism versus Chauvinism and Objectivism, written on 14 October 1987:

“"Comrade Pirani insists on the objective nature of the struggle for socialism (i.e. Trotskyism) and makes believe that, this is a stand for historical materialism. Of course none of his quotes from Marx, Engels and Lenin support his childish dogma. The fact is that he makes a great diversionary noise about the objective factor to prevent us examining too closely the political history of the SLL/WRP) in the north of Ireland and the LIT in Latin America, i.e. would be ‘revolutionary leaderships’ that failed to develop objectively fa-vourable situations in the direction of socialist revolution. Instead of subjecting those failures to self-critical analysis, as a Marxist must, Pirani prefers to sweep them under the carpet with utterly vague appeals to objective ‘difficulties’ and empty promises of a real accounting manaña. He thus prepares a repetition of past mistakes and betrayals. No more than a fish can swim without water, can a revolutionary party take power at the head of ‘unconscious’ masses!

And quoting from Marx; Theses on Feuerbach:

‘The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and that changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating. Hence this doctrine necessarily arrived at dividing society into two parts of which one is superior to society (in Robert Owen, for example) [and Simon Pirani – GD]. The coincidence of changing circumstances and of human activity can be rationally understood as revolutionary prac-tice.” (End Marx quote)

“"The class struggle is a materially determined, objective process. It continues with or without the existence of a Bolshevik type party as the conscious expression of that process. Recent decades, when the Fourth international has disintegrated, have borne this out.
But the subjective factor of a revolutionary party, when it grips the minds of the masses, becomes the decisive factor in the class struggle.”

That is the reciprocal action between the programme of a revolutionary leadership, and first of all the political vanguard of the masses in the working class, and then, through them, the entire mass of the oppressed. It is what changes the political (objective) conditions from pre-revolution to revolution. As I observed in the document the ‘struggle for socialism’ has two meanings. One is the objectively determined class struggle, whose only progressive outcome is ‘socialism’ the first stage leading to communism after a socialist revolution, where equality of opportunity only is possible. But the meaning for Marxists is surely the interplay between that and the struggle for the minds of men carried out by a Trotskyist party using transitional programmatic demands based on the science of Marxism”. Pirani deliberately confused these two aspects.

**Point Blank**

As long as we remain in the realms of academic controversy the point may escape most people, so it is necessary to put certain questions to Pirani point blank: Where do you stand on the attacks on nationalist areas by loyalist mobs which came into conflict with the British army in 1969? Do you support the view of the leader of your party, Slaughter, whom I have quoted above, that:

‘The objective logic of events’ expressed in these attacks’ was that ‘these workers (the loyalists) have been led to express their bitterness and frustration as victims of exploitation, unemployment and bad housing by taking it out (a euphemism for sectarian murders worthy of the best British disinformation unit. GD) on their class brothers, the Catholics. The clash with the troops signified that the maintenance of capitalist rule in Northern Ireland can no longer depend on this device’?

Here is the poisonous logic of your ‘objectively’ position and the cowardly silence you have maintained on the reactionary position expressed above, and that of Pilling and his defence of Pearce, show that either you have fundamental agreement with those positions or, what is more likely true in your case, you do not have the backbone to fight those who do. Do you accept the implication in Slaughter’s piece that this is a religious conflict and that there is no material basis for Loyalist reaction?

It is best perhaps if I develop the arguments taken up by Peoples Democracy member Lemuel Gulliver in his polemic with Pirani and me. The PD is the USec section in Ireland. Gulliver supports Pirani on the question of objectivity but, whilst his is also a totally undialectical and one-sided estimation, it comes from a different tradition. It is wholly in line with the USec tradition of denying the necessity of building revolutionary Trotskyist leadership as the subjective factor because of the bourgeois-democratic nature of the revolution or because some Stalinist or nationalist force may substitute as a blunted instrument to lead the revolution. Pirani is right in his attack on Gulliver’s basic ideological capitulation to Sinn Fein.

However Pirani’s ‘objectivism’ has a slightly different content, the object being to deny
the Marxist tactic of support for national liberation and to revert to the pure class struggle ideology of the old fashioned labour aristocracy (and the SLL/WRP) so brilliantly demolished by Connolly in his controversy with Walker. This Gulliver has no trouble in identifying and his comparison with Socialist Organiser’s line is well taken. Pirani has engaged in many debates with the SOs and their influence shows Pirani also argued that the relationship between Britain and Ireland has fundamentally changed since the last quarter of the last century. This has the very reactionary content of appealing to a section of the British liberal bourgeoisie that, as no material reason exists for the occupation of the six counties, then it is in their best interests to depart. This post imperialist theory is the cover for a capitulation to Slaughter’s plea for silence on the history of the SLL/WRP’s relation to Ireland and Slaughter’s own reactionary role in it.

National Culture

Another of his positions is that Irish culture and language is a diversion. This is put forward merely to prove that the national question is off the agenda as the peasantry is now only a tiny minority (30% still gain their living from agriculture). In Pirani’s reply to me: ‘Ireland: Marxism versus Revisionism’, this is how he dismisses Irish culture:

“Comrade Downing says: ‘There can be no talk of abandoning Irish culture for the sake of ‘unity” with loyalist workers.’ why does he counterpose the two? Of course we should not abandon our defence of Irish culture for anybody. But in the previous sentence he talks of Irish culture as a ‘weapon’ in the struggle against imperialism; it should be ‘abandoned’ not for the sake of loyalist workers but for the sake of the Marxists; (I must confess I had no idea at the time who these ‘Marxists’ were who could not tolerate Irish culture. GD) to struggle for power the Irish working class needs neither bourgeois nationalist culture nor unprincipled unity, but a Marxist leadership.”

The issue of national culture is of the utmost importance. Workers are not abstractions (“What does this mean?” Pirani asks in bewilderment in the above quoted document), they have a cultural history and separate traditions and cannot achieve equality with the working class of an oppressor nation by taking on the culture of the oppressor and abandoning their own. Pirani’s quote above is similar to an incident in the First International when Marx pointed out to the French delegates who wished national cultures to be abandoned that this amounted to everybody adopting French imperialist culture. Pirani wishes the Irish to adopt his own, English, culture. Perhaps we should say, with George Bernard Shaw:

“He is a barbarian, and thinks that the customs of his tribe and island are the laws of nature.”

This issue of cultural Imperialism is at least addressed in the ‘Pabloite’/PD tradition but not at all in the IC tradition. There can be no workers ‘unity without workers’ equality.
Christian Rakovsky

It is perhaps instructive to note here that this issue was not at all well understood in the Bolshevik party either by Lenin or Trotsky until the crisis over Georgia and the Ukraine in the early 1920s. It is to Christian Rakovsky that the credit must go for developing this aspect of Marxism on national culture. He held that national culture was the only way through which the working and peasant masses will gain access to political and cultural life:

“And hand in hand with national consciousness comes that feeling of equality which Lenin speaks of in his letter”.

Christian Rakovsky Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR 1923-30. Speech to the Twelfth party Congress (1923) p. 81 Allison & Busby

It was on this issue that Rakovsky pioneered the theoretical opposition to the rising bureaucracy and he then extended his analysis to every aspect of the problems that led to the bureaucratic degeneration. Trotsky took up his work only later. Though Rakovsky developed an idealist theory on the “Professional Dangers of Power” that took insufficient regard of the material causes of the reaction, he nevertheless pin-pointed the bureaucratic degeneration of thought that separated mechanically the political theory of Marxism from the social problems of the masses.

It is my belief that that separation has continued into the post-war Trotskyist tradition with the IC representing the dogmatic neo-Stalinist side (Marxism counterposed to culture) and the USec the reformist adaption to social problems at the expense of Marxism, despite many serious attempts to break out of this vicious circle of sectarianism and opportunism.

The new ‘Workers International’ (as the Preparatory Committee has now become) group in Ireland, the Revolutionary Socialist Group, is a re-run of these old IC policies, but as farce. It is designed to appease reactionary Orange sentiments in the Protestant working class and the labour bureaucracy. Their correspondent, John Steele, writing in Workers Press on 20 January 1990 gives his account of Healy’s crimes in relation to Ireland. Strangely he cannot find space to remind us of the prime betrayal of those years, the support for the border and the ‘Workers and Farmers government in Stormont’ slogan during almost the entire 60s decade and most criminally during the revolutionary situation of August 1969.

This almost wiped out the ‘Northern Ireland’ group and its Londonderry (!) branch and ensured that only those who were prepared to defend the nationalist communities, arms in hand, against the murderous assault of the RUC, the B Specials and the Loyalist thugs (Victims of exploitation?) had a right to call themselves revolutionaries. All would be revolutionaries who currently operate in the Loyalist community avoid this line, as it would go down no better there and in the labour bureaucracy than it did in 1969.
Membership

An incident on the editorial board of the Workers Press was typical of the way the reaction was setting in among the membership. Maire O’Shea, a veteran campaigner on Irish issues, had written a letter in criticising my attitude to the role of religion in Ireland in a piece I had published a few weeks previously. Her letter became a prominent article and my reply to her was about to become a letter. Remember I was the Convenor of the Irish Commission at the time, on the CC and the editorial board. Both Bridget Leach and Charlie Pottins were sure this was the correct emphasis to be given to the opposing views. I don’t wish to go into the merits of the argument here but my reply was sharper than it would have been because of the conflict. Pilling agreed to put my piece in as an article after the row about it, but no one on the board spoke in support of me.

Another aspect of the affair that deserves attention is the struggle within my own branch, Kilburn. It had made a certain stand against Healy before the split, though it must be said this was weak and directionless. Now, after the split, many branches were amalgamated due to the huge loss of membership and the branch was renamed the West London branch. Pilling came into the branch, though he only attended irregularly. John Simmance also was a member. It still had a core of Irish members, Charlie Walsh, J.T. and me. Another Irish J.T joined in 1986. Brian Dempsey, a Scot of Irish extraction, moved to the branch for a while but returned to Scotland around the start of 1987. When the period of reaction opened up certain problems were encountered. Though Pilling had no problem with L.L., John Simmance or Tom Scott-Robson, who quickly let it be known that they had no qualms adapting to the new conditions, the Irish were a different matter.

After all it was difficult to expect them to swallow the racist insults from Pearce, and Pilling’s defence of them, without some revolt, despite personal relations. Bringing in two old, inactive members and appealing to their party loyalties solved the problem. Pathetically, one of them was Irish. It was, of course, too much to expect any of the non-Irish members in the branch to repudiate Pearce.

Tom Scott-Robson, who did the translation of LIT material, played a crucial role here. He never translated the 23 Point programmatic agreement between Moreno and the Stalinists (the Peoples’ Front), being very selective in what he did translate. He must have known, of course, what Moreno represented, but silence on these issues was now definitely the best policy. However, when it came to witch-hunting oppositionists, he found his voice. He never entertained any doubts on WRP policies and even sent me a letter demanding ‘political justification’ for non-attendance at branch meetings on 28 July 1987 (at the height of the personal and political attack on me).

Relations with Simmance were particularly bitter. As chair of the CC that removed me from membership (of the CC) he played a particularly disgraceful role. He, too, had become a convinced Morenoite who saw no salvation outside Argentinean opportunism and, far from acting to uphold my right to speak in defence of my views at the CC, he actually constantly interrupted and harassed me from the chair. These issues, together
with the letter to the IWL comrade that never was, (discussed at the end of this chapter) made for very acrimonious confrontations in the branch in the summer and autumn of 1987.

I was removed as Branch Secretary without notice and L.L and Scott-Robson even tried to get the decision of the branch to elect me as one of the delegates to the Ninth Congress reversed (so I would not have a right to speak at the Congress) by calling another emergency branch meeting just before the Congress. Pilling’s instructions to silence me failed because branch members were too embarrassed to come to such a meeting. Dim memories of party democracy still lingered in places, it seemed.

How the Letter that Never Was Broke Relations with the IWL

This series of events was designed to rid the university academics and the aspiring trade union bureaucrats of troublesome Irish revolutionaries who might bring the wrath of the state down on their heads. The rest of the story of the break with the Irish Workers League is a series of rotten manoeuvres designed to split the group by excluding the most ‘troublesome’ member from the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee. There was series of lies and evasions to cover this up.

At a reception after the first meeting of the PreC Pirani was pressed by the IWL comrade who was in London on why the WRP had attempted to keep him from going to the first meeting. He (Pirani) said that this was not true and that he had sent a letter of invitation to the comrade. This story was defended as the truth from the Preparatory Committee on 11/12 April to the Irish School at the start of June. John Simmance said that he had the invitation but wasn’t prepared to deliver it to a squat for security reasons’. He was then unable to produce the letter when the IWL comrade asked to see it. He never came up with any letter at all.

At the Irish School the IWL member who had been in London insisted on raising the matter. Then Bob Archer disclosed that all the invitation letters had been sent out by him and he did not send one to the comrade in question. Archer’s admission created consternation. Either he was too slow to realise the significance of his statement, or he was intent on discrediting Pirani. Or maybe he just could not tell a lie.

A long silence signalled the moment of truth. Pirani said that it was the minutes of a meeting of the Irish Commission he had sent. The rest of the WRP loyalists present supported Pirani. Phil Penn in particular became very angry and had to be restrained. One of the Irish comrades was so naive as to believe that Penn was outraged at the way they were being treated. Of course Penn was angered by the cheek of the IWL in exposing the WRP’s duplicity. The School struggled to a finish with difficulty but there was no hope of any further comradely relations with the IWL after that.

Dot Gibson was quite forthcoming on the reason for the deception: “The comrade was under Gerry Downing’s influence”, she declared at the next CC meeting. The idea that I might be under his influence, or that both of us, independently, might have come to the
same conclusion about the publication of the Pearce letters and other provocations did not even enter her head, it seems.

This matter, too, was fought within the West London branch and again only the Irish members showed any opposition to the treatment of the IWL. The final break came with the letter of the IWL to the Preparatory Committee on 2 July 1987, severing relations. It is a sordid tale that after doing so much damage to Trotskyism in Ireland, the party who pledged so fervently to redress their past crimes and errors are now repeating them.

Footnotes:

(1) In fact I misread Slaughter’s article on this point. He did not admit it strengthened imperialism directly at all in his 1987 foreword. He said it only strengthened ‘imperialism’s ally, the Irish nationalist bourgeoisie centred in Dublin, against the workers of Ireland’.

So, supporting the border was not strengthening Orange reaction (no word of criticism of this in the foreword), not strengthening British imperialism itself (specifically denied) but the ‘Irish national bourgeoisie in Dublin’; obviously the main enemy. It must be observed that supporting the Irish bourgeoisie against the Orange Order and British imperialism is not a ‘crime’ that could be laid at the door of many British ‘socialists’.
Chapter 7: Social Relations of the WRP

“When you say attacks on lesbians and gays are a civil liberties issue, I hope you don’t hold the view that normal working class people aren’t homosexual anyway... So, are attacks on lesbians and gays not of immediate interest to working class lesbians and gays? A point to ponder ... Hope to see you at the Gay Pride march next week”. (Needless to say he didn’t. GD)


Or how the WRP leaders revealed their reactionary positions on social issues.

The McGoldrick Affair in Brent

To demonstrate the new ideology in the ascendant in the party the incident around the McGoldrick affair is proof enough. Brent Council suspended Maureen McGoldrick from her teaching post for an alleged racist remark. Whatever the truth of this allegation it was undoubtedly correct to defend her against this arbitrary action of the Council at this stage. Brent had overridden all trade union agreements in this action, and this was clearly part of an attack on the union.

McGoldrick claimed that Brent was supplying the school with unqualified black teachers in line with its tokenistic ‘race relations’ policy. However when the local Euro-Stalinist NUT and the national union became super militant on the suspension and issued the Council with High Court writs and put pickets on the school, every racist and fascist in the country joined in and it now became an open race attack on the Council’s Equal Opportunities policy with white Euro-Stalinist reactionaries pitted against the Council and black teachers. It had also become a stick for the labour bureaucracy to beat the ‘lunatic left’. This was the mood expressed by the WRP lumpens.

I was a UCATT shop steward, working for Brent Council, at the time and I had discussed the issue with the other left wing stewards, who initially supported her until she became a front for reaction. At this point they refused to support her any longer. The position of the right wing stewards was the exact opposite. They became her strongest defenders only when she began to be used to attack the Council’s race relations policy.

It should be said here that the Brent Teachers Association (the local NUT branch) voted not to take strike action in support of McGoldrick. The national leadership of the NUT, in alliance with the white Euro-Stalinist local leadership, then conducted ballots in a number of selected, right wing dominated schools to circumvent the membership and get authority for strike action. The wording on the ballot made it clear that this was not just action in defence of McGoldrick, but opposition to the Council’s Race Relations policy itself. Left-dominated schools were not balloted.

Racist Pickets

The Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Black Teachers Caucus correctly refused to honour these racist pickets. The local branch of the SWP also correctly refused to support
McGoldrick at the beginning but were forced to back down by a syndicalist, workerist line from their national leadership.

McGoldrick never disowned the racist support and became the darling of the ultra-right. I wrote a letter to ‘The Leninist’ exposing their workerist line of defence of workers’ pickets even when they were racist and against black teachers. I noticed Slaughter angrily pointing this out to a few CC members at the February CC. At the end of the meeting Dave Smith, Dave Temple and Mike Howgate approached me and furiously accused me of being a scab, of advocating the crossing of workers picket lines and being scum.

The provocation was so severe that I expected violence. Charlie Walsh, who is Irish and Norah Wilde, who is black came to my defence and the incident was defused. Of course the WRP did not discuss the incident later and refused to take any position on the McGoldrick affair. But it revealed that basic alliance of the cowardly academic Slaughter, who did not want the racist stench to attach to him, and the lumpen ‘workerists’ whose views on the struggles of the oppressed, be they black or Irish, were those of the Labour bureaucracy. It was no wonder they stayed silent on the Pearce question.

“...A trade union led by reactionary fakers organises a strike against the admission of Negro workers into a certain branch of industry. Shall we support such a shameful strike? Of course not.”


The Phil Penn Affair

The Phil Penn affair played a crucial role in holding the party together while it was in the midst of the raging internal struggle over the Open Conference, the opportunist relations with the Morenoites, the question of Ireland and the Pearce letters and the whole issue of internal democracy. In what was basically a re-run of the Banda-Slaughter ‘communist morality’ campaign of the immediate post-split era: an external enemy (the same one) was used as a paper tiger to divert the political energy of the party rank and file from the new reactionary alliance installing itself at the head of the WRP.

Phil Penn had got involved in a fracas with WRP (News Line) supporters on 3 May 1986 at a mass picket during the Wapping dispute. On 6 February 1987 he was jailed for 12 months, eight of them suspended, on the evidence of the police and three supporters of News Line. For eleven consecutive issues between 14 February and 25 April Workers Press launched their biggest ever campaign in the labour movement on this issue. Front page lead articles and double centre page spreads served to cover the metamorphosis of the WRP from an open, debating type organisation, whose rank and file were seeking to re-establish its revolutionary credentials, albeit in a very confused manner, to a closed, sectarian and opportunist type organisation, the plaything of English middle class academics and aspiring trade union bureaucrats, anxious to hide their retreat from revolutionary politics.

Such was the righteous fury whipped up by the initial ‘communist morality’ campaign...
that assaults on the News Line supporters were quite common, and accepted as justified in the party as a whole. After all, if the sole political difference between Healy and Banda was on the question of whether it was correct to use positions of authority to sexually abuse female members, then those types of people who supported Healy deserved a good kicking.

Assaults took place on Healy supporters at the print shop in Runcorn with iron bars and on some meetings in the Midlands by Banda supporters. There was an attack on a meeting at Conway Hall that I witnessed and several other reported incidents. No one objected to this at the time. Most of Healy’s ‘Security Department’ had gone with the Workers Press. I have referred earlier to Mike Banda’s assault on Corinna Lotz and to the assault on the young YS supporter of Hyland. Disorientated members were very much influenced by Banda’s boast: “When I go for a fight, I go for a funeral.

**Disputed Issues**

There are a number of disputed issues in this case. The Workers Press' Campaign was based on claims that Penn was attacked by four men, beaten to the ground and only injured Rodgers in defending himself. They further claimed that the sending of their members into the witness box by the News Line group to jail Penn was an act that crossed class lines. They point to a similar court case brought by the News Line group against the International Communist party in January 1987 in Sheffield, arising from an incident on 29 May 1986, when they claimed the ICP members had assaulted them. It was on this basis that many groups and individuals internationally supported the Workers Press over the Penn affair and these actions of the News Line group are difficult to defend. Penn was also assaulted in Leicester on 8 June 1986. This was just one month later and Penn had followed the News Line people there to photograph them. This can only be seen in the circumstances as a provocation. Penn claims he refused to co-operate with the police in bringing a court case against his assailants in this case.

The WRP resurrected the campaign on 23 June 1990 and directed it against Richard Price, leader of the Workers Internationalist League. This arose from the decision of the Public meeting held by the Workers Press on Gerry Healy to exclude Bob Pitt, a WIL member and author of the WIL’s series on Healy in their news-paper ‘Workers News’. The purpose of this, undoubtedly, was to discredit the WIL, in a period when it is making big developments in the field that the WRP has abandoned; the reassessment of the history of Trotskyism since the war with the aim of the regeneration of the Trotskyist movement internationally. Its political development was serving as a pole of attraction for other Trotskyists, as the WRP had promised to do for a period in 1986-87.

Price claims Penn launched an unprovoked attack on them, that this was the latest in a number of serious assaults on the WRP (News Line). He further claims that Penn expressed no regret for the injury caused to Eric Rodgers and did not dispute police evidence that when arrested he had said that he hoped that he had blinded him (Rodgers) and that he had admitted in court that he had attacked News Line group first. He did not
claim in court that he had been knocked to the ground. Rodgers, according to Price, was injured so seriously that his vision was impaired and he lost his job as a British Rail guard at Liverpool Street station as a result. Given this series of assaults, claim Price, they had no option but to resort to the courts to defend themselves, as Trotsky had advised against the CPU. No further assaults have occurred since the two court cases.

Given this situation and having uppermost the question of removing all obstacles to the freest and most open historical re-examination and political and theoretical clarification of Trotskyists and all working class militants I think it is correct to call on both parties in this dispute to agree to a labour movement inquiry by those recognised as honest brokers, similar to that agreed to by Trotsky, the Dewey Commission. All involved should agree to abide by the decision of this inquiry.

**The Sam Cox Affair**

In February 1987 the Sam Cox affair arose. It was important because a further gain of the party in its resurgence was rolled back. At the special conference in October 1985 a furious row arose over the proposal of Mike Banda, supported by the entire remaining old leadership, to expel Healy then and there and override the constitutional requirement to afford him the right to defend himself against the charges at the next conference. John McGarry, from the Harlesden branch, proposed the objection, which really said that the party was not going to allow its leadership to do as it wished with the constitution and, bad as it was as a revolutionary document, contempt for the constitution represented contempt for the membership. The old leadership, with Bill Hunter to the fore, furiously defended their right to act independently of the control of the membership, and as soon as the meeting understood the point at issue the leadership was defeated. This said, in effect ‘we don’t trust you either’.

At its meeting of 8 March 1987 the CC proposed to remove Sam Cox from membership of the CC because he would not declare himself a Trotskyist, saying that in light of the corruption of the WRP he needed to examine the whole history of communism. We all agreed to the exclusion, albeit some with strong reservations. Mine were that the CC had a right to suspend Cox from party membership and even to expel him, provided he was properly charged and given all his constitutional rights. Suspending him from the CC only was not an option as he had been elected by party Congress and was answerable to the next one. We conceded this point, which was a big mistake as it was a gain for the reactionaries and was again usurping the rights of the membership. Richard Goldstein moved his removal.

Significantly Hunter now specifically defended his stand on the Healy expulsion issue at the special conference of October 1985, which demanded freedom of the party leadership from control of the membership. The precedent thus set was later used against Bailey, Bruce and me in July 1987, when we were removed from the CC. The Cox affair was referred to the Control Commission, who delivered the necessary verdict, as they again did on all questions.
WRP Returns to Healyism on Special Oppression

The race issue again arose when Dave Smith passed an outrageous racist remark about Irish people at the Ninth Congress in November 1987:

“You want to bury the Preparatory Committee, even the Irish don’t bury people until they are dead”.

He also made a sexist attack on Norah Wilde, calling her a ‘batty woman’. When he was eventually forced to apologise he did so only to the ‘Irish comrade’ as if only Irish people would be insulted by anti-Irish racist remarks! British Trotskyists had to be more careful about who overheard them.

CW’s intervention was crucial here. While opposing Smith he said that he (Smith) had made the remark because he was a victim of British imperialism (this same type of Slaughterite excuse could be made for every reactionary on the planet. GD) and people were only attacking him as an excuse to get at the party. Indeed it is obvious that the views Smith expressed were encouraged by the Pearce letters and the CC’s defence of them. Phil Penn took the same line; i.e. loyal party members would have ignored the remark. Smith was voted on to the new Central Committee immediately afterwards. Only the Internationalist Faction voted against the CC slate.

In response to this unprincipled, opportunist manoeuvring, a number of other opposition groupings emerged in the WRP. The North London branch of Richard Goldstein, Vangelis, Paddy Winters, Louise and Sue and Norah Wilde had opposed the leadership more or less consistently since the start of 1987. The IF failed to attract their support basically because it refused to define itself politically. The resignation letter of Louise and Sue and the other comrade was a principled document, though I could not agree with the orientation to the LIT. In fact the one of the crimes that they correctly accused the WRP of, misogyny, they soon discovered within the ISL and they had to leave that too.

The group around ex-CP member John Reese in East London grew disgusted also and left but again the IF could not intervene. They basically left over the sectarian and opportunist manoeuvring of the WRP in attempting to sabotage the movement around the support groups which had sprung up to assist the miners, print workers, hospital occupations etc. Many others left around the end of 1987 - start of 1988, some around Peter Rickard doing Turkish and Iranian solidarity work that formed a discussion group.

Blackest Marks

The appalling treatment of Brian Dempsey was one of the blackest marks against the WRP. He came into conflict with Pilling because he was refused publication of an article on the AIDS crisis because this would not have interested workers. Pilling replied to Dempsey’s complaints in a letter dated 17 May 1987. While acknowledging that:

‘While there is no doubt that the attack on gays does involve issues which have implications for civil rights and liberties and clearly it is the responsibility of the revolutionary
party to take up such issues as firmly and as clearly as possible (‘I am not a homophobe’ is the message here GD) ... but... the basis of the Marxist conception of politics is the revolutionary role of the working class. Only the working class, by means of its historical relationship to the capitalist system, can overthrow capitalism. While we do not, of course, confine our attention to the issues which immediately interest workers, we must, nonetheless, take these issues into account when deciding the weight of our propaganda and agitation.

So, while I would not be opposed to the discussion on the issues you have raised, I would not give it top priority or even put it near the top of my list. Here we may, of course, disagree. But I think it is a difference of political understanding which is involved and not any effort to suppress discussion in the paper.”

Dempsey answered this letter on 16 June:

‘The ignorance of the WRP membership on the lesbian and gay liberation question is little short of staggering although it is not surprising. People come into the struggle with all sorts of prejudices and any one coming into the WRP prior to 1985, and that’s just about everyone currently in the WRP, would not have their prejudices and ignorances challenged... One member of the CC thought that all gay men really wanted to be women. He quite readily accepted that this was not the case when I challenged him, so it was not so much a deep going prejudice as ignorance.

When the capitalists attack lesbians and gays, that is a direct attack on the working class. Attacks on lesbians and gays may not be of ‘immediate interest to workers’ just as attacks on blacks or Jews may not arouse the entire working class, but it bloody well should.

It is ironic, don’t you think that Brian Pearce’s ‘men with the rosaries and Armalites’ have developed more sophisticated positions on lesbian and gay rights than many on the atheistic left. When you say ‘attacks on lesbians and gays are a civil liberties issue, I hope you don’t hold the view that normal working class people aren’t homosexual ... So, are attacks on lesbians and gays not of immediate interest to working class lesbians and gays? A point to ponder... Hope to see you at the Gay Pride march next week’.

This homophobia from Pilling was compounded by Dempsey’s instant dismissal from his job in the WRP’s Glasgow bookshop on 18 May 1987 because he criticised the party in a public meeting the previous day, at which Geoff Pilling was the speaker. Hilary Horrocks attacked him hysterically, as he arrived for work the following morning, no doubt on Pilling’s instigation. He was thrown out of his job without any knowledge of whether he was sacked, suspended, if he would get his P45 or his legal requirements. This after he had given up his own job to work long, badly paid hours in poor conditions to assist the party. He had to wait until 29 July for a reply from Simon Pirani. It is a classic:

Dear Comrade,

In answer to your letters of 18/5/87 and 19/7/87 the Political Committee supports Comrade Hilary Horrocks in all the efforts she has made to resolve
all the problems at the Hope Street Book Centre, including her decision to tell you to leave the shop instead of working out your period of notice.

Since you were only working out notice which you yourself gave, therefore the question of being sacked to ‘shut you up’ or otherwise does not arise. You have received all payments due.

Yours Fraternally, Simon Pirani on behalf of the Political Committee.

Hilary Horrocks and Pirani got rid of him in a manner illegal for a capitalist employer and, of course, totally morally indefensible in a revolutionary organisation, whatever the law said. The present Workers Press avoids the lesbian, gay liberation and AIDS issues like the plague. Dempsey was the only ‘out’ gay man in the history of the WRP. His treatment make absolutely sure there won’t be any more.

The WRP is once again a pariah in the labour movement, in large part because of this backwardness. It cannot carry out any united front work with other left-wing groups and has lost all the respect won in the period after the split that lasted up to the beginning of 1987. In fact very few of its present members were active in the party before the split with Healy.
Chapter 8: The debate on Stalinism

“But in Eastern Europe it was the working class which mobilised to push aside the capitalist stabilisation and the bourgeois property in 1945-47. The Stalinist bureaucracy’s role was to control, discipline and suppress the working class, and to impose the bureaucratic-police regime.”

Cliff Slaughter’s reply to the IF, 28 July 1987, explaining that the Stalinists did not (or did, depending on how you read it) overthrow capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe.

Diametrically opposed positions on Stalinism

A Stalinophobic trajectory is the gel that holds together the WRP and the Workers International, but the evolution to that position is very interesting. The two diametrically opposed positions on Stalinism that have characterised the IC and the USec traditions, Stalinophobia (1) and Stalinophilia (2), coexisted on the Preparatory Committee in the form of the Vargarites and the Morenoites, from its foundation in April 1987 to its eventual split in February 1988. The political juggling act performed by the WRP leaders to join in wedlock these strange bedfellows and the eventual collapse of these attempts still remains unexplained by the WRP.

Mike Banda’s position of uncritical support for Mao Tse Tung against his Opponents in the Chinese bureaucracy and the worse position on Vietnam, where the murder of the Vietnamese Trotskyists was justified by Steve Johns in ‘Fourth International’ 1975 expressed a method common to both sides in the 1953 split. It was one of the first pamphlets produced by the Thornett group after the 1974 split and the Spartacists and the Chartist group had written pamphlets on it also. I was the first to raise the issue and had a long article on the question published in Workers Press in June 1986. Simon Pirani subsequently wrote extensively on this and on the Chinese Trotskyists, making trips to Paris to meet some Vietnamese Trotskyists who are in the USec.

Chris Bailey made a long analysis of the only real attempt in the IC tradition to solve these problems, his ‘Critique of Wohlforth’s Theory of Structural Assimilation’. The document was a serious effort to establish the materialist basis and mechanism for the overthrow of capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe and in China, Cuba and Vietnam. No one was able to assess its worth in the WRP.

The expansion of Stalinism post-war he attributes to its ‘internal drives’ which is a very problematic formulation, opening up questions of WHAT it was driving for, profit? Was it not the defensive reflexes of the encircled Bureaucracy? Apparently not. He then says there will never be a repeat of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Bailey says that this is like Plekhanov’s position, which Lenin called ‘dogmatic-utopian’, expecting an exact repeat of past bourgeois revolutions. He says that since the deformed workers states exist now, a socialist revolution anywhere in the world must incorporate the programme of political revolutions in the deformed workers states with socialist revolutions in the other capitalists countries, after it has nationalised its own property relations. This, says Bailey, must
be the new theory of Permanent Revolution. This seems fine to me. In fact the document is a real contribution to the theory of what happened to Stalinism post war.

**US League for the Revolutionary party**

Sy Landy and Walter Dahl, of the US League for the Revolutionary party, a left state capitalist group, made one assessment. He was taken by the notion that Bailey’s analysis left the door open to theories of state capitalism of which he approved. He also claimed that Bailey was leaving the door open for other reactionary conclusions by adopting an agnostic, objectivist attitude to history.

It does seem to be true that in relying too much on economic and mechanically political issues in the overthrow of capitalism after the war, Bailey tended to leave the question of the lack of revolutionary Trotskyist leadership out of the equation and did not see this as having any negative effect in the progress of history and the ability of the Stalinists to manipulate the masses to their advantage.

But there is little of substance to most of the rest of Landy’s criticisms. It is totally wrong to equate the recognition of the fact that Stalinism overthrew property relations in post-war Eastern Europe with an abandonment of the need for a revolutionary leadership to make socialist revolutions. Never mind the way the socialist revolution is cunningly equated with a bureaucratic overturn of property relations to defend bureaucratic privileges in the phrase ‘the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie’.

It is also wrong to ascribe to Trotskyists, or to Chris Bailey either at that stage, the notion that they support only ‘democratic control of the means of production’ and therefore seek only democracy. This may be Mandel’s position but he cannot be considered a consistent Trotskyist by any stretch of the imagination. Landy then counterpoises this ‘reformist’ outlook to his own perspective: The revolution must be social: It must destroy the Stalinist state apparatus not just reform it”.

He must know that the consistent Trotskyists also wish to destroy the ‘Stalinist state apparatus’ by political revolution, that ‘democracy’ i.e. a struggle against corruption and for workers democratic rights, is only the first awaking of the political revolution, as Trotsky calls it. What the Trotskyists seek to preserve is nationalised property, the relations of production of which constitute the Workers State however much it has become deformed by Stalinist corruption. This is the first prerequisite for socialism, though obviously it does not guarantee it.

Sy Landy claims that Bailey is saying that nationalised property is not proletarian property and that he is approaching a ‘third campist’ conception of the Stalinised states. Although he afterwards took these positions and did become a third campist, I cannot see that this document is approaching this despite the suspect formulations. I would need to be convinced of this by stronger arguments than those advanced by ‘Andy. It seems to me that Bailey decided to adopt the positions ‘Andy wrongly ascribed to him at the time, in order to seek an escape rout following ‘Andy’s visit to Britain in 1988.
Adam Westoby, who made the second analysis of the document, approved of the confusion. Westoby seized on the weakness, the lack of appreciation of the decisive role of the subjective factor, to promote his right wing anti-communism of Schachtmanite origin. The vagueness on what ‘work still remained to be done’ left Westoby with the idea that Bailey could still be convinced that the nature of the bureaucracy was unknowable, and perhaps be recruited to the camp of reaction. But Bailey was not out of step with the WRP’s political ecumenism, and was still open to draw any conclusion if an attempt to tackle these problems was made at the time.

**Unprincipled Bloc**

I have already outlined Slaughter’s unprincipled bloc with the Stalinist Banda against North and his insistence that Dave Bruce withdraw his document characterising Banda as such: “Banda may yet have much to offer” he argued. I assessed Banda’s position as Stalinist at the Congress in February 1988 and this met with great disapproval. Had the membership known the extent of Banda’s degeneration at the time the split with the IC might not have been so damaging.

The good work of re-examining all positions was drawing to a close in the end of 1986. A long letter to the Workers Press from Mike McNair, a personal contribution from a supporter of the then International Group, dated 12/12/1986, was refused publication by Geoff Pilling. It was a remarkable analysis from someone who was a ‘Pabloite’ far more advanced than most analyses produced in the WRP up to then. No wonder Pilling refused to publish it. McNair asserts that Pablo’s ‘liquidation’ of the early fifties was only opportunism (wrongly) but points out all the myths that have dogged the IC positions on that split since. More importantly he produces a real analysis of the overturns of the capitalist property relations based on a materialist understanding of Stalinism, of its world counter-revolutionary role and its dealings with imperialism on a world scale to protect and advance its own power and privileges. His final comments are prophetic of the lost opportunity,

“But if the comrades fall back into a hard line and uncritical anti-Pabloism they will find themselves in due course back in the swamp from which they emerged with the expulsion of Healy and leave the rest of us in the swamp we were already in which the crucial questions couldn’t be openly discussed. That would be not just a pity, but a catastrophe.”

**Slaughter’s Stalinophobic turn**

In October 1988 the WRP held the Hungarian Revolution anniversary meeting at which Bob Pennington, a ‘Pabloite’, and Varga spoke. The debate between Gerard Laffont of the FI (rebuilt) and Dave Bruce on the one side and Slaughter, the WRP majority leadership and Varga on the other that followed determined the present right-wing positions of the WRP.
It must again be stressed that it was not simply an academic discussion about the nature of Stalinism, but a theoretical rational for the unprincipled relationship with the labour bureaucracy of Temple Gibson, Simmance, Bevan etc., the layer of aspiring bureaucrats. After all it was easy to be exceedingly anti-Stalinist in Britain, as the CP had very small forces here. It was entirely different to be exceedingly opposed the other ‘completely counter-revolutionary International’, Social Democracy and its political representatives in the TU bureaucracy.

This is the position of the Pd/OCT in France and has been since the fifties. It was from this position that Bleibtreu-Favre attacked Pablo in 1951, and correct as many of the points were they contained that weakness which was later to prove fatal for the revolutionary development of that party. The PCI position within the social Democratic Force Ouvrière made entry into Stalinist parties impossible. Varga never made a critique of this position and continues to hold it to this day. It was a ready-made formula for the new Slaughterite WRP and was simply reasserting an aspect always present in the IC.

The basic point of difference between Laffont/Bruce and Slaughter was on the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Slaughter again and again tried, as Varga had done in his split struggle with the H (rebuilt) to confuse this point and to ascribe a theory of a dual nature of Stalinism to anyone who asserted, with Trotsky, that the Stalinist bureaucracy played a dual role in defence of nationalised property relations in the deformed and degenerated workers states, whilst no such duality existed for the Comintern (national CPs today), their role being totally counter-revolutionary. The blanket term ‘Stalinism’ was used to confuse the issue here. Was it the Stalinism of the CPs in capitalist countries, the Stalinism of the CPs in the Stalinist countries or the Stalinism of the bureaucracy itself, were all these things equal despite Trotsky’s analysis and did the confusion of the masses on these questions, to say nothing of Slaughter’s confusion, have no implications for a Trotskyist programme of transitional demands?

On being pressed on his position that ‘Stalinism is not part of the workers movement’ Varga explained that this meant only the Stalinist parties in Eastern Europe and the USSR, etc. whilst this is true in general it has always been used by Varga as a Stalinophobic cover for softness on capitalist restoration, which is seen as the lesser evil. This led Varga into supporting all types of anti-socialist rightwing parties against ‘Stalinism’ as the WRP was later to do in relation to SWAPO.

“**The most counter-revolutionary force on the planet**”

In other words the class nature of the bureaucracy, its historical origins and its position at the head of a deformed or degenerated Workers State was ignored and replaced by moral judgements on how bad the bureaucracy really was. ‘The most counter-revolutionary force on the planet’ etc. Slaughter became an anticommunist witch-hunter in the style of Joseph McCarthy who could spot someone who was really a Stalinist at forty paces.
(acknowledgements to D Bruce for the characterisation). Of course if the class nature of the bureaucracy was denied it could only be some form of new ruling class. This was clearly approaching State Capitalism, of a Schachtmanite if not of a Cliffite variety.

The Cambridge resolution for the April 1987 Congress fails to mention Stalinism, though it was really only an attempt to defend the initial drive of the WRP for an Open Conference. This is an appalling capitulation to Stalinism! The Internationalist Faction asked for an analysis of the role of Stalinism in overturning capitalist property relations post-war and uses the phrase ‘on the one hand ... on the other hand’ - clearly a dual nature theory! Pabloism is the pressure of Stalinism within the Trotskyist movement (only). When T raised the question of capitulation to social democracy, capitulation to General Peron and chauvinism towards Ireland as being other constituent parts of a capitulation to bourgeois ideology within the Trotskyist movement at the April Congress an unprecedented torrent of hysterical abuse landed on my head.

I will not repeat all the arguments of the debate here but raise one or two points. Slaughter characterised the situation thus in his reply to Laffont,

“Thus the dual nature of the Workers State is dual precisely in that the working class and the bureaucracy are the proletarian (socialist) and the bourgeois side of this duality”

As Dave Bruce re-phrases this in a meaningful syntax;

“Thus the Workers State has a dual nature because the proletariat is the proletarian side of the duality and the bureaucracy is the bourgeois side.”

In what way does this differ from a state capitalist theory? In what way would Schachtmanites, Cliffites or Landyites disagree with this analysis?

Of course Trotsky never spoke of any dual nature of the bureaucracy, the state or anything else, as Bruce points out. Again when replying to the IF founding document, Slaughter makes the astounding claim that it was the working class and not Stalinism that overthrew the capitalist relations in Eastern Europe. As Joseph Hansen pointed out in relation to Cuba, ‘If the facts contradicted your theory, so much the worst for the facts’!

**Defeated Uprisings**

The line has a definite logic; either the mobilisation of the working class forced the bureaucracy to carry out revolutionary actions on behalf of the working class despite its counter-revolutionary nature (pure Pabloism, I’m sure we all agree) or the working class has no need at all of leadership. Imperialism was forced to rely on Stalinism to save capitalism in Italy, Greece and France in the immediate post war period, reflecting the extreme weakness of the European bourgeoisie. This is what gave Stalin the power to negotiate on favourable terms with imperialism at Potsdam, Yalta and Teheran. It was also what gave him the freedom of action in East Europe.

In fact as we know it was only when the Stalinists had defeated what uprisings there
were in response to the advance of the Red Army (Czechoslovakia etc.), or allowed the Nazis to massacre them, as in the Warsaw Uprising and when it was clear at the end of the forties that imperialism would compromise no longer with Stalinism and that the capitalist governments in Eastern Europe were a real danger to the Soviet Union that the bureaucracy then overthrew the property relations. This was done bureaucratically, and would and could not have been done if the working class was in revolt and undefeated.

There are some variations on this. In Czechoslovakia they had to accommodate more to the pressure of a large working class with a long militant history. Of course, Yugoslavia made its own revolution, but this was at the head of a peasant army, without any independent mobilisation of the working class in workers councils or soviets. Tito, in fact, murdered the Yugoslav Trotskyists, a fact hidden from the movement by the FT leadership before the 1953 split and after it by both the IC and the USFI/USec.

But the determination to prove that Stalinism never, not even in its own interests, carried out a single historically progressive act was in total contrast to the great progressive role being ascribed to Arthur Scargill, who has strong Stalinist leanings! Social Democracy was actually defined as ‘an adjunct to Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary force’ in the ‘Programme on which the World Conference would be Called’ produced by the WRP in December 1987. The Labour party an adjunct to the CPSU, the CPGB or the CPB?

**Home to Roost**

The position on SWAPO was a further development of this right wing turn. The WRP of Namibia was founded in May 1989. It was a result of a split from a Trotskyist group on the issue of whether it was tactically correct to attempt to enter SWAPO. The future WRP group was against any entry tactic into SWAPO, but for the independence election March 1990 it did enter a right wing anti-SWAPO block and effectively defended the South African regime during the elections by concentrating its entire attack on SWAPO’s torture and killing of its own dissidents, the ‘SWAPO Detainees campaign.

The evidence make it clear that SWAPO did commit these terrible crimes against its own left wing and these crimes were correctly exposed. The issue was how it was done and how SWAPO should have been defended against imperialism whilst preparing the defeat of the SWAPO leadership by the Trotskyist programme of transitional demands. That was the only way to sharply differentiate the revolutionary from the reactionary in the anti-SWAPO camp. The WRP never even attempted to make any differentiation at all.

The Stalinophobia of Varga was coming home to roost. The WRP was on the wrong side of the class divide. Collaborators with apartheid because they called themselves ‘Labour’ were politically preferred to the main anti-imperialist party, SWAPO. No transitional demands were therefore necessary on SWAPO to break the masses from their treacherous leadership. Slaughter must bear a heavy responsibility for so dangerously isolating these Namibian comrades, where they now have no basis to appeal to the SWAPO rank and file when the inevitable repression comes.
Interestingly the ICP’s ‘International Worker’ reports in its issue of 4 August 1990 that one Susan Dobson, a white South African woman, who worked as a double agent for the ANC, had to flee from Namibia to London to avoid arrest. The International Worker tells that she revealed her brief in Namibia:

“The brief of the covert South African team in Namibia was to portray the South African regime in a favourable light in the pre-election period and to discredit SWAPO by feeding information to journalists they considered sympathetic which would be published in South Africa and abroad. Particular attention was to be paid to publishing allegations of torture by former detainees held by SWAPO...”

The IW comment:

“It is now apparent that Dobson’s superiors found at least one sympathetic’ conduit in the form of Slaughter’s WRP.”

Of course the TOP have no concept of Transitional demands either, they can make no political evaluation of the WRP’s intervention and so are reduced to suggesting that Slaughter is an agent, and giving implicit uncritical support to SWAPO. They clearly learned nothing from the 1985 split.

The WRP agrees with the Healyites on one fundamental aspect of the crisis of Stalinism. Whereas Healy hailed Gorbachev as the instrument of the political revolution, the WRP hails the ‘objective process’ and the spontaneous movement of the masses, regardless of leadership, as the instrument. Both political lines agree that the political revolution is well under way, regardless of capitalist restoration and the primacy of bourgeois and reactionary parties in the political process. We are in the February 1917 period of the revolution, claims Slaughter, farcically. No Bolshevik party, no soviets, no dual power, nothing is necessary to prove this connection only the decree of Slaughter and Varga.

**Appendix 1**

This is the unacknowledged letter to Janos Borovi and the Preparatory Committee written in December 1989. It was published in the WIL’s Workers News with a few minor alterations:

Open letter to Janos Borovi and the ‘Preparatory Committee’ from Gerry Downing of the Revolutionary Internationalist League and former member the Workers Revolutionary party (WRP, Workers Press).

**Why so long comrade Janos?**

At the beginning of an article exposing the fake Trotskyism of Ernest Mandel, leader of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (Workers Press 4 Nov.1989) Janos Borovi of the Hungarian League of Revolutionary Socialists makes an extraordinary attack on the Argentinean MAS. The Stalinist bureaucracy is prepared to consider anything
to keep its power, he argues “even the possibility of an alliance with pseudo Trotskyists can be considered, as that of the Argentinean CP with the Movement to Socialism”.

Why so long in speaking out, Comrade Janos? Could this be the same MAS and the same Alliance of 1985 that WRP leaders Cliff Slaughter, Simon Pirani, Geoff Pilling, and Bill Hunter defended so ably against attacks from without and within? And this bothered WRP leader Cyril Smith and Michael Varga and Janos Borovi of the Preparatory Committee so much that they were struck dumb? Or is Comrade Janos just another in a long line of troublemakers trying to suggest that the MAS/OP Alliance was a great betrayal and that the proposed merger between the WRP and the MAS was unprincipled opportunism?

However aside from a sneer at past crimes inadvertently acknowledged a new outrage is being perpetrated. In Argentina this Popular Front in name and fact (it called on bourgeois parties to join) is OK, despite the still unrepudiated positions of Slaughter and Pilling that “Stalinism is the most counter-revolutionary force on the planet” but in Namibia a principled Trotskyist United Front policy cannot be perused to expose SWAPO before the masses.

The electoral alliance which was used to justify the “no votes for SWAPO” policy of the WRP of Namibia was “an extraordinarily broad alliance” says the Guardian of 14 Nov. It included collaborators with Apartheid according to an amazing admission by Workers Press on 4 Nov. This should give Slaughter no problems, however. He has never renounced his view expressed in 1969 and repeated so provocatively in the midst of the conflict with the Irish Workers league, that loyalist mobs who came into conflict with state forces preventing them from murdering nationalists were acting objectively against capitalism.

The WRPs of Britain and Namibia have forgotten to identify the main enemy in their haste to condemn SWAPO. There is practically no mention of the South African murder machine in all the Workers Press’ coverage in a return to the old Third Period Stalinist/Healyite methods Does the consciousness of the masses and their illusions in SWAPO ever enter the equation? If Stalinism is Imperialism’s main agent in the workers movement does this mean that no conflict of interests exists between them which the workers can exploit to their advantage? The Trotskyist method of united front and transitional demands obviously has no place in Namibia and those who advocate them are counter-revolutionary according to Slaughter. But then as all the notes on the piano are equal, why have tactics? Perhaps the entire WRP is like the unfortunate Cyril Smith who is not interested in tactics, only in Marxism as he sagely pontificated during the conflict with the South African Trotskyists. This must he how he managed to miss the occupation of the London School of Economics where he is a lecturer.

To illustrate the seemingly opposite position SWAPO’s record is defended uncritically by Labour Briefing 22 Nov. by Ben Campbell. It seems from this follower of Mandel (or perhaps he is just a reformist Labourite, so hard to tell the difference) it is aiding imperialism to expose the crimes of Stalinism. Here lies the essential political character of both sides of
Campbell applies the ‘blunted instrument’ theory of Ernest Mandel. He even goes as far as saying that “SWAPO was the only party to put foreword a comprehensive programme of radical reform, but its leadership seems not to be trusted by a minority of black ethnic minority groups.” Perhaps this had something to do with the campaign of assassinations of dissidents, leftists and intellectuals carried out by SWAPO over the past number of years.

If a Trotskyist party is not necessary to mobilise the masses to seize power then the next best will have to do, and to hell with the ‘SWAPO detainee issue’. This is only the old social-democratic argument that Trotsky should have stayed silent on the crimes of Stalinism for fear of discrediting socialism!

However Campbell does give us a pragmatic analysis of the outcome of the elections. All the opponents of SWAPO who were elected bar one were apartheid collaborators. This includes the four United Democratic Front allies of the WRP. The one sided emphasis on the crimes of SWAPO, resulted in a right wing reaction. It could not be otherwise.

Slaughter on the other hand must now perform the most amazing gyrations to justify this betrayal. He tells us on 18 November:

The South African ruling class, imperialist great powers, the Stalinist bureaucracy... are the conspirators, their instrument is principally SWAPO. And in this way SWAPO represented directly the interests of the ruling class’. There was an imperialist/Stalinist plot that SWAPO had to get 87% of the votes to form a government, according to Slaughter (~3). How foolish these Stalinists are to set themselves such a target when 42% was enough for Thatcher!

As if remembering some Stalinism from his past Slaughter now Justifies his criminal sectarianism against South African Trotskyists demands for united front tactics by exactly the same arguments by which German Stalinism rejected Trotsky’s call:

*The United boat from below.* We will direct propaganda and proposals for united action to the rank and file of SWAPO, against their treacherous leaders’. As Trotsky said, if the masses saw their leaders as treacherous then they would abandon them. It simply amounts to a demand that the SWAPO rank and file joins the WRP.

The Third Period of Stalinist leftism was no less disastrous than the subsequent Popular Front class collaboration period. The International Committee tradition, which the WRP claim, was no less disastrous for Trotskyism than the United Secretariat tradition. The Fourth International can only be reforged by an unyielding struggle against both traditions.

**Appendix 2**

This is the text of my letter to Workers Press.
To the Editor, Workers Press from Gerry Downing of The Revolutionary Internationalist League. December 1989

**Workers Press - a new rightward lurch**

The relationship of the masses to their existing leaderships and how the masses may be broken from these leaders and won to revolutionary socialism is the prime question for Trotskyism. Revolutionary situations are the most favourable occasions when the method of Transitional Demands as developed by Trotsky in the founding document of the Fourth International may be tested. Then the masses rapidly test out a range of leaders and ideas and instinctively seek the one that will lead it to victory. The utmost sensitivity to the consciousness of the masses is required together with the correct programme based on Marxist principles.

Stung by the glaring contradictions in its line on Stalinism and the national liberation movements, the Workers Press has decided to junk the old Trotskyism and eliminate these contradictions by abandoning critical support for national liberation movements and Stalinism against imperialism. This would not be so gross a betrayal were it not for the struggle on the support for the IRA in particular fought for after the expulsion of Healy in 1985.

“"We are arguing that socialists in this country must defend the right of the IRA to make attacks on military targets" (only?) says the editor of Workers Press on 21 Oct and 9 Dec. We can only presume from this that the News Line was correct to condemn the Brighton Bomb. Ah but you see whilst defending them we cannot support them because this would be to support their policies of bourgeois nationalism and this Trotskyists cannot do. Further as the Stalinists are in league with the imperialists and both want to keep the Berlin wall (even Helmut Kohl?) we should be equally opposed to the Warsaw Pact and to NATO. No support for a Labour government against the Tories (not even as the rope supports a hanged man?) and certainly no support, no defence, no nothing for SWAPO against imperialists, fascists or anybody else. No wonder Tom Cowen is so overjoyed at this and Bernard Franks so troubled.

Lenin had no problem with ‘support’: “All communists must support the revolutionary liberation movement by their deeds” (stated Thesis 1 la on the National and Colonial question p 181, Second Congress of the Communist International, New Park Publications). Is this not still formally part of the WRP’s programme?

Trotsky likewise had no problem with ‘support’: “We support Abyssinia not because the Negus was politically or ‘moral’ superior to Mussolini but because the defence of a backward country against colonial oppression deals a blow to imperialism, which is the main enemy of the world working class”.

So Trotsky would support a backward feudal ruler against Italian imperialism but Workers Press cannot support the IRA against British imperialism. The WRP use precisely the political and (mainly) moral inferiority of SWAPO to justify the refusal to support them
The only basis for regroupment they put forward was to unite:

‘Those committed to the political independence of the working class and the national liberation movements fighting imperialism.

Fair enough for a conference, but scarcely a sufficient basis for a new international!

**International responses to the call: Australia**

The struggle around these 10 Points as outlined in January was limited. I wrote the only critical document in Britain at that stage, on 23 January. Already the basic politically contradictory positions on Stalinism were evident to me and there for all to see. Varga believed that Stalinism was not part of the workers movement and Moreno sent a ‘Greeting to the Congress of the CP in the Capital’ hailing them as revolutionary co-fighters. No one else, not even Dave Bruce or Chris Bailey took up the cudgels on that question at the time.

But Paddy Collins from the Australian group ‘Spark’ in a letter to Slaughter on 15 January exposed the whole sorry scenario for me. He pointed out that it was no better than the historical scenario of Healy, North, Banda or Mandel:

“I find it repellent, actually, that we have before us the instructive lessons of the essentially right-wing trajectory of the OCI and the Militant grouping, who erect a sectarian barrier to justify their opportunism, by ending all theoretical statements with a ritual and obligatory denunciation of revisionism, and a proclamation of the necessity to struggle against revisionism, that you would campaign, as you are doing, for an ill-defined and explored block with the Morenos and also, possibly, some smaller ‘anti-revisionist groupings, the block being so designed so as to cater for the organisational interests of all concerned and also designed to prevent the clear, politically necessary discussion being opened with the majority of the USecs.”

This was followed by an Open Letter from Collins on 24 April, on the 10 points. He called it: “Ten Points - nine of them designed to freeze discussion among Trotskyists where it should begin, and also designed to justifiy the current position of the LIT whatever it might be.”

On point 3, an expanded defence of Permanent Revolution, Collins notes that Popular Fronts are not mentioned, here or anywhere else in the Call. He questions the defence of the ‘institutionalisation of the Republic’ of Moreno in the 1976 coup in Argentina and asks if the same is happening again. (In the crisis in April 1987 in Argentina the MAS signed just such declarations in the provincial capitals, according to the Argentinean Partido Obrera. The MAS deny this but what they cannot deny is that they, and their forerunners signed every such declaration over the previous 20 years. See IF document ‘De-fenders of Trotskyist Continuity’ p. 7 GD). He also notes that the point:

‘... does toss in a pejorative condemnation of ‘epicentres’ and ‘sectarianism’ designed to politically hang the rival USec centrists for betrayal”.

On point 4 he gets to the real political content of the Call:

“And again, in Point 4, an implicit square off for whatever tactic may be adopted by
the LIT in the current struggle in Latin America, is introduced with equal opacity in this passage:

The defeat imperialism requires a strategy and tactics of breaking the working class from the existing Satanist and reformist leaderships, uniting on the programme developed through a century of struggle for Marxism as the theory and practice of the proletarian revolution.’

What a delicate and indirect way of introducing the question of strategy and tactics. The hidden agenda is fairly clear, and it is similar to the way such groups as Lambert’s and the Militant in England go on.

If, by previous definition, you establish to the satisfaction of yourselves, in this case the three block partners, that you are the continuity of Trotskyism and of Leninism that continuity is supposed to confer on you a sort of benefit of the doubt in relation to strategy and tactics, a sort of assumption that whatever accommodations you make are just Leninist flexibility etc. etc. Implicit prior endorsement of the strategy and tactics of the LIT, which is obviously the point of this paragraph, strikes me as a very dangerous enterprise, politically speaking... This point emerges again and again in the ‘Ten Points’, the sly attorney’s way in which apparently innocuous statements are organised to pre-empt the necessary discussion in a way to justify the current and past practices of the bloc partners and condemn at the same time similar current and past practices by their perceived factional opponents.”

Collins goes through the other points to show this method in operation in issues like guerillaism and single issue politics (the excuse of the SLL for not participating in the anti-Vietnam war demonstration, the ‘why we are not marching’ fiasco).

In his conclusion he quotes from the Socialist Organiser theoretical magazine ‘Workers Action’ of March 1981:

“We approached the Parity Committee with a view to taking part in the open conference and the preparations for it. So did other Trotskyists, for example the Workers Socialist league.

We had been bitterly critical of the OCI in the past. Despite the truth of its criticism of the USFI on Nicaragua we were adversely impressed by the fact that the OCT gave very little attention to Nicaragua until the crisis in the USFI erupted and then spent much more time denouncing the Sandinistas and the USFI than they did in supporting the Sandinistas against Samosa. We knew less of the Bolshevik Faction (the Morenoites). It had been part of the SWP-led LFT, splitting over differences on Portugal and Angola in 1975-76. What we knew of it did not inspire confidence. Despite all this it was vital to test the promises and the possibilities.

But those possibilities started disappearing very quickly. The Parity Committee was
against imperialism. Anyone with even a slight knowledge of ‘In Defence of Marxism’ knows that even after the most horrendous crimes of Stalin, Trotsky made it clear that a defence of the USSR signified a defence of the corrupt bureaucratic regime against imperialist aggression. (4) (See ‘In Defence of Marxism’ New Park pp. 25,35 et al)

It is impermissible to counterpose the building of an independent Trotskyist leadership to support for national liberation movements. If SWAPO ‘only’ got 57% of the votes in the Namibian election (42% did Thatcher) they got the vast majority of the workers votes. It is ridiculous to propose that the masses support the tiny WRP of Namibia or the even tinier Socialist Revolutionary Group of Ireland without a fully worked programme of Transitional Demands designed to break the masses from their old leaders.

Trotsky combined a ruthless exposure of the crimes of Stalinism (as he would expose the crimes of SWAPO today) with unconditional defence and support of Stalin and the nationalised property relations against imperialist aggression. That does not sound very much like the campaign of the Workers Press today.

Even worse, in Namibia it was a popular front of Apartheid collaborators and a very confused ‘Trotskyist’ group that was counterposed to SWAPO. This was combined with demands on the SWAPO rank-and-file - the ‘United Front From Below’. In unique fashion the WRP managed to combine the worst features of Stalin’s Third Period’ ultra-leftism with the popular front era of collaboration with bourgeois forces.

No Trotskyist transitional demands necessary here to break the masses from SWAPO, only ‘revelations’. Whether or not to enter SWAPO or the British Labour party is a matter of tactics determined by the actual position on the ground. Is it really true that entryism is so impossible because SWAPO’s hold on the masses is so great or is the contradictions within it so great as to make an entry tactic very successful? The latter seems to me to be the case.

According to Workers Press’ reply to Bernard Franks “But we must be clear that in defending the property relations of the Soviet Union we are not defending socialism... but the whole point is the Soviet Union is not a socialist state... that is why we say ‘Down with the Warsaw Pact, (Remember we also say ‘Down with NATO’).”

But this is not the whole point. Stalinism does not equal imperialism, nor does the Warsaw Pact equal NATO (Stalin’s ‘twin evils’ theory resurrected). Trotsky, in defending the USSR against hostile public opinion and pointing out that “the monstrous development of the Soviet bureaucracy and the wretched living conditions of the masses have extremely reduced the attractive power of the USSR for the world masses” nevertheless “yet it does not follow from this that the USSR must be surrendered to the imperialists but only that it be torn out of the hands of the bureaucracy”. (In Defence of Marxism p 216)

The events in the deformed workers states can be the first blows of the political revolution against Stalinism but also contain dangers of capitalist restoration. The decisive question here will be the building of revolutionary leadership that will defend the property relations as well as overthrowing Stalinism. To defend bankrupt positions it is no good
opposing grosser bankrupt positions. Of course the French PCI have a reactionary position of a reunited capitalist Germany. Of course the News Line supports uncritically bourgeois nationalist regimes and even defends the murders of Iraqi Communist party members by Saddam Hussein and the Vietnamese Trotskyists by the Stalinists.

It is not true that “both the Stalinists and the leaders of imperialism stand opposed to the destruction of the Berlin wall and the re-unification of Germany” WP 16 Dec.) Some imperialists oppose capitalist re-unification of Germany fearing the re-emergence of a German superpower and the inter-imperialist rivalries that led to two World Wars. No imperialist power is opposed to capitalist restoration in East Germany or anywhere else and to suggest that there is a Stalinist/imperialist plot to preserve Stalinism in East Germany is anticommmunist paranoia in the extreme.

German imperialism positively favours capitalist re-unification. What all Stalinists and all imperialists are opposed to is a political revolution in the East that might spark a socialist revolution in the Federal Republic. To make plain the difference with the PCI Stalinism and imperialism fear a United Revolutionary Socialist Germany. Workers Press in not making this vital distinction goes along with the present anticommmunist hysteria.

“It is the duty of all revolutionists to defend every conquest of the working class though it may be distorted by hostile forces. Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones.” Trotsky

Appendix 3.


Torn Kemp replied on behalf of Workers Press

Gerry Downing begins by bowing to the masses. To say they ‘instinctively seek (the leaders) that will lead it to victory’ borders on mysticism. The role of the revolutionary leadership is to break the masses from old leaders, combat bourgeois ideology in the class and raise its consciousness to the level necessary for the taking of power. The conscious, subjective factor is always decisive. What is lacking in the USSR and Eastern Europe today is such a revolutionary leadership.

While Downing has read the Theses on the National and Colonial Question’, apparently he has not studied or digested it. He picks out one sentence, leaving out all the vital conditions and qualifications. Thesis 11 has to he read as a whole, noting that it applies only ‘to those states of a more backward, predominantly feudal, patriarchal or peasant patriarchal character,’

Theses 11 a reads in full:

The communist Parties must support the revolutionary liberation movement in these
countries by their deeds. The form the support should take must be discussed by the communist party in question, should such a party exist.’

The following sections of 11 calls for an ‘unconditional struggle against... the reactionary and medieval influence o (the clergy, Pan Islamism, etc.

Thesis lie reads: ‘A determined fight is necessary against attempts to put a communist cloak around revolutionary liberation movements that are not really communist in the backward countries [SWAPO?/ANC]. The Communist International has the duty to support the ‘evolutionary movement in the colonies only for the purpose of gathering the components of future proletarian parties - communist in fact and not just in name - in the backward countries and training them to be conscious of their special tasks ... of fighting against the bourgeois democratic tendencies in their own nation’

Clearly Downing has not understood Lenin’s theses, for they fully endorse support for ‘the tiny WRP of Namibia’ and our attitude towards SWAPO.

Downing’s cavalier attitude towards quotations and his empirical (bourgeois) methodology lead him astray, too, in what he says about the USSR. He says that Trotsky ‘made it clear that a defence of the USSR signified a defence of the corrupt bureaucratic regime against imperialist aggression’ and he ‘combined a ruthless exposure of the crimes of Stalin ... with an unconditional defence and support of Stalin and the nationalised property relations against imperialist aggression.’

Readers can check for themselves whether this accurately represents Trotsky’s position in ‘In Defence of Marxism’. But let us refer to the founding programme of the Fourth International, which says, in the event of an attack by the bourgeois-fascist grouping of Butenko:

‘Although it would find itself temporarily an ally of Stalin, it (the Fourth International) would nevertheless defend not the bonapartist clique but the social base of the USSR, i.e. the property wrenched away from the capitalists and transformed into state property.

Should the ‘faction of Butenko’ prove to be in alliance with Hitler, then the ‘faction of Reiss’ (who came over to the Fourth International) would defend the Soviet Union from military intervention, inside the country as well as on the world arena. Any other course would be a betrayal although it is thus impermissible to deny in advance the possibility, in strictly defined instances, of a “united front” with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counter-revolution, the chief political task still remains the overthrow of the same Thermidorian bureaucracy. Each day added to its domination helps rot the foundation of the socialist elements of the economy and increases the chance of capitalist restoration’.

Downing vulgarises this position, and fails to relate it to the current upheavals. For example, ‘being the temporary ally of Stalin’ under very specific circumstances (fascist attack or war) is not the same as Downing’s formulation: ‘an unconditional defence and support of Stalin...’ He has not noticed that the overthrow of the bureaucracy remains ‘the chief
political task’.
Indeed when there is no question of a fascist overthrow or direct military attack, there is no question of support for the bureaucracy at all!

Applied to the present situation the correct line is to work for the political overthrow of the corrupt (Gorbachev) bureaucracy which is opening the way for capitalist restoration, while defending unconditionally the nationalised property relations and gains of the October Revolution.

Meanwhile, we have to recognise that the bureaucracy is incapable even of organising the military defence of Eastern Europe and the USSR. The Red Army, in the hands of the bureaucracy, is an instrument of counter-revolution (Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968). The Warsaw Pact is, in any case, falling apart, with the connivance of the Soviet leadership. By turning off the support systems of the national bureaucracies in the deformed workers states it ensured their downfall.

Workers Press was wrong to say that both the bureaucracy and imperialism were against the destruction of the Berlin wall, though they have differences about German reunification. Early in 1989 Gorbachev signalled the imperialists by saying ‘it’s not our wall’. But by the time it was demolished it had become largely symbolic, because tens of thousands were already streaming out of East Germany. As for East Germany’s economy, it has for a long time been closely tied to the capitalism of the Federal Republic.

This by no means diminishes the importance of events in East Germany where Trotskyists stand for the political revolution, the only way in which the nationalised property relations can be preserved. If the workers take power in eastern Germany this would have an electrifying effect in the rest of the country. But for this a revolutionary party has to be built in both parts of Germany. In the meantime we should propose a transitional policy such as: no reunification without preservation of nationalised property relations, and a general strike against re-unification on any other terms. This can give concrete expression to the political revolution.

Meanwhile in various parts of Eastern Europe workers are calling for the withdrawal of the Soviet army, which they see as an occupying force. Moreover it is clear that the Red Army would be used against the political revolution and would become, not a barrier against capitalist restoration but a necessary support for it. That is why unprecedented talks between it and NATO have already taken place, about plans to maintain and restore ‘order’.

Last but not least Ireland. Again the ‘Theses on the National and Colonial Question’ provide a useful starting point. The IRA is a bourgeois-nationalist movement in a capitalist country with a sizeable working class, different from the kind dealt with in theses 1 la. Its goal is to oust British imperialism from the north of Ireland and establish a united republic. Trotskyists have as their goal the overthrow of capitalism worldwide and the establishment of a federation of socialist states.
The Republicans have a two-stage theory: first a united country, then the social system will be determined (‘But to begin with it will be capitalist). The IRA believes their goal can only be achieved through a particular form of armed struggle: the goal of socialism cannot be achieved by these methods, in which sell-sacrificing individuals substitute themselves for the working class, the only consistently revolutionary class.

The methods used have to be consistent with the ends. This does not exclude revolutionary violence in certain circumstances, i.e. in a direct struggle for power. Undoubtedly, as history shows, it would differ from the IRA’s armed struggle.

Downing appears to want a blanket endorsement of whatever forms of struggle the IRA leadership adopt. We have seen nationalist movements before which use armed struggle to bring the other side to the negotiating table. If the IRA seeks to take power by armed struggle why does it not use the same methods of in the south of Ireland as in the north? Is it likely that the IRA can win a military victory without the working taking power in Britain?

In any case Downing wants it both ways. On the one hand he talks about the masses instinctively seeking out the movement which will lead it to power, on the other hand he cannot deny that even in Ireland the working class does not support the violent methods of the IRA against non-military targets. While we may believe that too often the IRA sacrifices its fighters in fruitless actions, nonetheless we defend its right to do so. The IRA leaders reflect and represent the enraged petty bourgeoisie (whatever their actual class origins) not the historic interests of the working class in Ireland or internationally, which require the overthrow of the landlords and capitalists of whatever nationality. The priority in Ireland is building a revolutionary leadership to lead the working class.

**Appendix 4**

Jim Smith’s reply to Tom Kemp.

**Workers Press 10 February 1990.**

Tom Kemp’s reply to Gerry Downing (Workers Press 27 January) indicates an element of chauvinism in relationship to Ireland. Tom Kemp is correct on what he says about Stalinism and the leadership of SWAPO, and Gerry Downing is wrong. On the question of the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland, Kemp is wrong and Downing is correct.

Tom Kemp’s worst mistake is that he accepts the link between the defence of the leadership of the SWAPO and Stalinism on the one hand and of the IRA on the other.

As Kemp and other leaders in the Workers Press over the past few weeks have shown, the leadership of SWAPO is today betraying the working and other oppressed people of Namibia. Workers Press was thus correct not to support SWAPO in the Namibian elec-
tion. To take this position is totally different from the position with which Gerry Downing charges the WRP viz., ‘certainly no support, no defence, no nothing for SWAPO against imperialists, fascists or anybody else.’

Tom Kemp fails to answer this charge, and yet as far as I know the WRP has never refused to defend SWAPO or any other organisation against armed attack by imperialism and fascism.

However it is absolutely essential for a paper claiming to be socialist that it stands for the struggle of oppressed nations against imperialism. This means being on the side of the IRA and Sinn Fein when they struggle against British domination.

Lenin enthusiastically quoted Marx’s position on Ireland in his argument against Rosa Luxembourg in ‘The Rights of Nations to Self-determination’. Luxembourg had described Polish independence from Russia as ‘utopia’ and asked ironically: ‘Why not raise the demand for the independence of Ireland?’ Does Kemp likewise see the independence of Ireland as ‘utopia’, which cannot be supported?

It was Trotsky who drew up the Manifesto as adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International which stated that: ‘the British socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy - such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy if not with a bullet, but in no case merits either a mandate or the confidence of the proletariat.

Kemp states: ‘the historic interests of the working class in Ireland require the overthrow of the landlords and capitalists of whatever nationality.’ Quite true. But they also require the overthrow of British imperialist domination. If the WRP is to contribute to the building of an International which will lead the working class in Ireland to overthrow capitalism, it must stand in Britain for unconditional support for Irish independence.

The result of Kemp’s weakness in regard to Ireland are evident in his answer to Downing: his answer in regard to the anti-working class nature of Stalinism and the SWAPO leadership because he does not distinguish between the anti-imperialist struggles of the IRA and the collaboration with imperialism practised by the Stalinists and SWAPO leaders.

A more exact parallel would be between the SWAPO leadership and those Irish nationalists and former Republicans who supported the Treaty in 1921-22, and who then carried out the brutal suppression of the genuine anti-imperialist republicans, and felt no shame in borrowing English artillery to do so.

I am not suggesting that the IRA and Sinn Fein should never be criticised. However the main task of revolutionaries in Britain is to fight against ‘our own’ imperialist bourgeoisie. This means solidarity with all forces fighting for Irish independence, however faulty their policies might be, and total opposition to British imperialism’s unjust war against Ireland.
In his lengthy but wordy letter Jim Smith makes a number of unfounded allegations, the first of which is that my reply to Gerry Downing ‘indicates an element of chauvinism in relation to Ireland’... The dictionary defines ‘chauvinism’ as ‘bellicose patriotism’; will he point out what I wrote puts me in the same camp as Ian Paisley? To claim that the British working class as a whole is infected with ‘bellicose patriotism’ is, at least, an exaggeration.

Appendix 5

This is the unpublished text of my response to Tom Kemp’s reply to my letter to Workers Press written in February 1990,

To the Editor, Worker. Press.

Dear Editor, Jim Smith’s support for my position on Ireland is welcome, however I cannot accept his assertion that there is a qualitative difference between the support revolutionaries are obliged to extend to Sinn Fein and to SWAPO and that there is no connection between the WRP’s attitude to national liberation movements in colonial and semi-colonial countries and the attitude to Stalinism and the degenerated and deformed workers states. I’m sure the WRP would agree with the latter proposition but from the opposite side!

Also the distinction between the anti-imperialism of the IRA and the pro-imperialism of SWAPO made by JS is very dangerous as a political assessment. What guarantee is there that a compromise deal will not be made by Sinn Fein? If such is more difficult in Ireland it is only because a national bourgeoisie is already in power (whose original name was Sinn Fein) and nothing much is on offer to Sinn Fein yet. But a week is a long time in politics, as we are all discovering again. The anti-imperialism of Sinn Fein has a very unstable, conjectural character, as seen by the Adams/Whitelaw talks of the early 70’s. The pro-imperialism of SWAPO is also unstable, as was seen by the constant attacks on its election workers by South African forces and further conflicts which may yet arise.

The point is that it is the right of NATIONS to self-determination that must be supported. It is the entire colonial or semi-colonial nation, bourgeois and proletarian that are oppressed by imperialism and this is the material basis for the conflict between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. The revolutionary socialists in imperialist countries must support, critically, the BOURGEOISIE of these countries as well as the working class in their conflicts with imperialism.

Without such support it is impossible to win the working class to the position of Trotskyism by the method of transitional demands. Tom Kemp and Jim Smith seem equally ignorant of this Trotskyist programme for winning the masses. Tom Kemp’s accusation that I am mystically ‘bowing to the masses’ smacks of the old Healyism. Only by seeking such
demands to bridge their existing level of consciousness to the necessary level for socialist revolution can we prove that only the Trotskyists can lead them to victory.

The WRP took initially a chauvinist line on the Malvinas war, then on the motion of Mike Banda, Bill Hunter and others adopted uncritical support for Galtieri that left no room for the intervention of a Trotskyist party in Argentina. Post split this was found to be the attitude of the Morenoites so the position was never rectified, despite the fact that the ‘Theses on the National and Colonial Question’ was well digested by Tom Kemp and others.

Sinn Fein is a petty bourgeois revolutionary party; not a bourgeois nationalist party as TK asserts and is not qualitatively different from that dealt with in Thesis 11 a. SWAPO is in the process of transforming itself into a bourgeois nationalist party from what was previously a petty bourgeois revolutionary grouping heavily influenced by Stalinism (similar to what Sinn Fein did in 1921 -23, which Smith remembers, and as the ‘genuine anti-imperialists’ of de Valera did in 1927 which he forgets). Nevertheless TK’s quotation from Thesis 11 a proves that SWAPO should be supported, critically, in order and only in order to build ‘future proletarian parties’. This the WRPs of Britain or Namibia totally failed to do and that point was unanswered.

Again and again it must be asserted that it is the material fact of national oppression (however much ‘theoreticians’ seek to prove that no basis for conflict exist as Ireland is now a developed capitalist country) that drives some workers into the arms of the national bourgeoisie and the more advanced into the camp of the petty bourgeois revolutionists and obliges revolutionary socialists to place transitional demands on these leaders to enable them to build a Trotskyist party.

It is the material basis of the Stalinist bureaucracy’s power and privileges that impart to it its contradictory role (not nature) in the defence of the nationalist property relations: they defend them as the source of their privileges, but by bureaucratic methods of their own, repressive of both left and fight, which undermine and weaken the Soviet state and economy. From this again arises the obligation for critical support.

I’m sure the WRP has not adopted the position of David North and the International Committee that Gorbachev is simply a capitalist restorationist but the line of ‘but the whole point is the Soviet Union is not a socialist state’ and the equation of the Warsaw Pact with NATO is dangerously close to state capitalism. Trotskyists should unconditionally be for the destruction of NATO, they should demand the REPLACEMENT of the Warsaw Pact by armed defence guards based on democratic workers soviets. It is not without significance that Sy Landy, a left state capitalist, should contribute the odd article to Workers Press.

The issue is that if a conflict arises between capitalist restorationists in the USSR or East Germany and the bureaucracy we are obliged to support that bureaucracy, critically, again using transitional demands in order to politically educate the workers and build the only real guard against restoration, a Trotskyist leadership for the masses to lead the po-
litical revolution.

I am pleased to see the line on Germany somewhat rectified but that was merely symptomatic of the entire political drift of the WRP. All scholastic assessments of Stalinism without a material grasp of the underlying historical processes is simply hair-splitting.

Finally I said nowhere that I wanted a blanket endorsement of whatever forms of struggle the IRA adopt but all qualifications that Lenin made of Theses 11 a did not make it mean its opposite. If I did not quote all he said on the subject it was because I set out to prove that he and Trotsky ‘supported’, actively, the national liberation movements whereas TK wishes only to write the odd article in ‘defence’. That went unanswered as did the charge about the attitude to SWAPO ‘no support, no defence, no nothing to SWAPO against imperialists, fascists or anybody else’. How embarrassing for the WRP to have to report the defection of one of its allies to the government, but as all these UDF allies who were elected had previously collaborated with apartheid it could so easily have been predicted.

Comradely, Gerry Downing, Revolutionary Internationalist League

Appendix 6

Here are extracts from the two opposite, and equally incorrect, positions on Stalinism. The first is from the preamble to the resolution and the resolution itself on which Varga split from the Fl (rebuilt) in 1984 and the second is from the document the ‘MAS sends greetings to the conference of the OP in the Capital’ in October 1988

Ninth Congress of the Fourth International

Two Resolutions

‘The Ninth Congress was the climax of a fierce clash between on the one hand the Faction for the Theoretical, Political and Organisational Rearmament of the Fourth International (this later became the Group of Opposition and Continuity of the Fourth International - M Varga was not one for the short, snappy title GD) on the basis of its proletarian orientation and, on the other hand, the leadership. The documents we publish here make clear the central issue: should the Fourth International line up with those who consider Stalinism a ‘part of the workers’ movement along with other tendencies? Has the Kremlin bureaucracy - centre and source of the Stalinist world apparatus - positive aspects, or a ‘dual nature’?

It appears that it was this which prompted the leadership’s refusal to make public even their own resolution, accusing our faction of being ‘Schachtmanite’ because we refused to consider Stalinism as a tendency in the workers movement like any other (on other occasions, the majority even called it ‘a legitimate tendency’)

...council also rejects the characterisation of Stalinism as a legitimate tendency in the workers movement - it is the ‘syphilis of the workers’ movement’, to borrow Trotsky’s expression.

**MAS sends greetings to the conference of the CP in the Capital (Oct 28, 1886)**

Comrades:

We wish first of all to send your conference the warmest fraternal greetings and the fervent wish that the debate you are having will have the effect of strengthening that great tool we are building together, the People’s Front.

Undoubtedly both you and we could add further differences to the list compiled by the pen pushers of the bourgeoisie. But all the differences that we are debating - and those yet to be debated - have to be approached from a basis and irreconcilable coincidence: the defence of what unites us. The unflinching struggle to defend the PF, and its 23 programmatic points and the frontist practices we have already started to deploy. These are extraordinary conquests which we will defend with all our energy. But in addition we say to the bourgeois agents of imperialism and the captains of industry: the programme of the People’s Front is the only one that offers the possibility of a real way out in the face of national surrender and the growing misery foisted on the people by the radical government. We categorically affirm that faced with the Plan Austral and the pro-imperialist demagogy of the reformers the only realistic option leading to liberation and revolution is the 23 points of the People’s Front programme, *in which the views of all those involved coincide.* (My emphasis GD)

This demagogic statement was reprinted in the Internal Bulletin early in 1987 without protest from anyone but me. Of course there can be no doubt that a popular front and not a united front is being described here.

**Footnotes:**

(1) Stalinophobia; A politically unbalanced fear of Stalinism which often results in it being treated as the main enemy, and social democracy being preferred to it. In extreme cases even bourgeois parties have been preferred to Stalinism. Particularly marked in the International Committee tradition.

(2) Stalinophilia, A political preference for or capitulation to Stalinism. Mainly seen in the USec tradition, but also present in the International Committee (Mike Banda).

(3) Erica Beukes of the Namibian WRP repeats this obscene boast at the founding conference of the Workers International in Budapest in the spring of 1990, as reported in The International, No. 1.

“Right now, as I said, the SWAPO government is completely exposed. It didn’t get the two thirds majority that it wanted and it is due to our fight.”

(4) This was not entirely correct. Tom Kemp’s elaboration on this is the correct one. How-
ever he does use this error, a sloppy formulation of the tactic of a temporary alliance or block, (‘united front’ is not correct here) against imperialist aggression or a direct internal fascist threat to cover up for the fact that Workers Press does not support such a tactic at all and uncritically hails even reactionary movements as the ‘mass action of the working class’ and the ‘political revolution’ even where this has led to capitalist restoration, as in East Germany. Also ‘fascist overthrow’ leaves out the question on what should be the attitude of Trotskyist to a ‘democratic’ capitalist restoration.
Chapter 9: The relationship with the LIT

“Alas the storm is come again! My best bet is to creep underneath his gabardine; there is no other shelter hereabouts: misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows. I will here shroud till the dregs of the storm be past.”

Shakespeare; The Tempest, Act 2 Scene 2.

Or how the WRP leaders found shelter beneath Moreno’s gabardine.

Extraordinary reaction

The extraordinary reaction to Chris Bailey’s report on his US trip did not initially get support from the entire CC. There were many doubters and even five votes against the majority axis of the academics and the aspiring trade union bureaucrats at the January 1987 CC meeting. However the die was now cast and the opposition of Pirani, Poulsen and the doubts of others soon disappeared when it became clear that Slaughter meant business with his new alliances and a split might result from any serious opposition.

Leon Perez was installed in the party HQ with full access to all party facilities. Bailey’s internal report on his US trip was handed over to him, as was my document, ‘For a Reassessment of our History and a Developing of the Transitional Programme and of Marxism’, written on 23 January 1987. In it I attacked what I saw as the errors of the call for the International Conference:

“The call for the International Conference is seriously flawed and avoids a reassessment of our history and will exclude political groups, a serious discussion with whom would force such reassessment. It must therefore be amended in a number of areas. The necessity for doing this is clear when we look at the positions of the two tendencies our leadership is now so enamoured with - the Varga group and Moreno’s LIT. Varga’s group regards as fundamental Trotskyism and the prime reason for splitting with the ‘La Verite’ group that Stalinism is not a part of the workers’ movement...

Moreno’s attitude to Stalinism, on the other hand, is to form a ‘People’s Front with them (the term stinks to every Trotskyist), to greet them as revolutionary socialists and to present them as co-leaders of the revolution. Both these positions are equally wrong, yet these tendencies are politically preferred to the International Group, the Socialist Group and the Workers Power. None of these hold such wrong positions on this most vital question for Trotskyists. Again as Bill Hunter points out Moreno’s conception of an international is one in which Trotskyism may be a minority current. Who may the majority be Castroites, Sandinistas, Stalinists?”
I also correctly identified Varga as an unregenerate Lambertist in that document:

“Varga’s theory of the International Committee continuity is, of course, the Lambertist line and he shows the same preference for social democracy before Stalinism ... His position on the united front and on joint work with other groups in his own country -only to win their best members - is classic sectarianism; putting the interests of the party before the class. Varga has made no reassessment of the splits of 1953, 1963 or 1971...”

These two documents were also handed over to the Vargaites before the party could see them. Henceforth Perez attended all CCs and any other meetings he wished and no further basis was available for internal discussion on Bailey’s report. When it was apparent that Perez was now effectively running the WRP and Bailey, the Secretary of the International Commission, was being treated with such contempt, he stormed out of the CC.

Half way round the World

As already noted Dave Temple dismissed Bailey’s report on the violent conduct of Perez in the US with the typical narrow, nationalistic outlook of the TI’ bureaucracy; it was something which happened “halfway around the world” he said. Bob Archer accused Bailey of opposing Perez because he was a foreigner! Hunter made great play of Bailey’s walk out of the CC, yet had no regard for the manner in which the word of Perez who had just appeared on the scene was taken, and Bailey, a party member for some 23 years, effectively branded a liar for honestly reporting the numerous accounts of physical assaults from US Trotskyists. The parallel with the way the reports of Healy’s thuggery were dismissed by party functionaries was obvious for all that wanted to see.

On 24th February I wrote the ‘Reassessment and Development not a Political Mule’ document raising some of the appalling positions of the Morenoites:

“...If this does not demolish Cde Slaughter’s (defence of the) ‘united front’ what of its call of 1-1-‘87 for an electoral alliance with ‘all the political forces who declare themselves anti-imperialist, anti-oligargic or of the left, in particular the Partido Intransigente, the Nueve Iquerda (New Left), the Movimento Todos por la Patria (the Movement of Everybody for the Fatherland!), Workers party as well as those sections of the ruling Radical party and the Peronists who are ready to confront the ‘plans of dependency’ of their leadership... The theory underpinning all this is expounded by their historian Ernesto Gonzales in ‘What is Peronism? P83 where he states ‘The recognition that we were in a nationalist -bourgeois front has no other significance than confirming in words what we were doing in practice. Nor did we put any confidence in its leadership, although our newspaper recognised we were under the discipline of General Peron’.

I quoted from their Internal Bulletin ‘What is to be Done’: 
“The building of a mass international, therefore at this moment, will take place through the building of national workers and revolutionary mass parties. These parties will possibly not be Trotskyists nor will Trotskyists be in a majority within them except under exceptional circumstances. They will be semi-Trotskyist organisations that tend towards Trotskyism, although they don’t go all the way’. What kind of a political mule is this?”

This got no real answer, but then as I was almost the only one in the WRP who sought out the politics of the MAS at the time, I could safely be ignored as a crackpot.

**Chris Bailey in opposition**

Chris Bailey wrote a document on all this on 19 February. However its entire drift was to re-assert the principle that we must re-assess the past and not abandon this, as Slaughter was now doing. He drew no conclusions himself from his own re-assessing and thereby handed the political initiative to Slaughter. It was as if he was conceding he had no political right to fight for leadership and no confidence in himself to do so.

This judgement, of course, is with the benefit of hindsight and I am more than aware that the I had no conception yet of forging a new leadership opposed the old one, but I did fight on the political issues, without seeing that a victory had to include a defeat of and a split with the old leadership. I can only say in my defence that I had not at all grasped the nature of the corruption of the old WRP leaders at the time.

Bailey’s document ‘A Reply to Comrade Cliff Slaughter makes this point:

“Comrade Slaughter is avoiding such a reassessment. He says: ‘Pabloism was the instrument of pressure from the Stalinist bureaucracy within the Trotskyist movement. It was Stalinism (not imperialism? GD) which was compelled to destroy the Fourth International. This means, to be sure that there are not Trotskyist parties in every country and no International’. But was it just Pabloism that was the ‘instrument of pressure’, Comrade Slaughter? Did not the IC play a role in making sure there was not Trotskyist parties in every country and no international?

Is not that exactly what we confronted when we overthrew Healy? Can we simply carry on with a reasserting of principles and forget the past? Do we not have to trace the roots of the IC failure in its history?”

It is perhaps apt to note here that Bailey relates that during one of those acrimonious Political Committee meetings at the start of 1987 (Chris Bailey and Dave Bruce were on the PC as was Richard Goldstein) Slaughter broke down and wept, confessed that he thought his usefulness was at an end and that he should retire and allow the new leadership to take over. Bailey should have twisted the knife while it was in!
There were many sources of information on Moreno available to members, ranging from the documents written by John Lister and others, representing the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC), (the body of international co-thinkers drawn together by the progressive nature of the 1974 struggle against the WRP waged by the Thornett group) in the late 1970s to the Spartacists ‘Moreno Truth Kit’, articles and documents from Workers Power sources, volumes of material from the Argentinean Partido Obrera and many others. Most WRP members just did not want to know what Moreno represented politically, it was sufficient that the academics put a veneer of Marxism over him, just as they did for Healy, and it was swallowed, hook, line and sinker.

A bizarre incident happened around that time. At the CC meeting at the end of January 1 denounced Moreno’s political positions in the strongest terms and drew much hostility from the meeting. I had just sat down when a rumour began to circulate; ‘He’s dead’! People began to look at me with even greater hostility. Then Bill Hunter arose to tell the meeting that Moreno was dead but could not bring himself to say it through his tears. And this for a man he had only met twice in his life, once in 1958 and the other time in 1986! Needless to say he would have cheerfully shot me dead at the time.

The Workers Press produced a lying obituary, which never mentioned any of the controversial aspects of Moreno’s career. It was as if the WRP wrote an obituary for Mandel and never mentioned Pabloism. Pirani actually defended it by saying that he would do just that for Mandel. It was clear now that no examination was contemplated of Morenoite politics or positions.

**The Simon Bolivar Brigade**

One of the big issues that gave some credence to the supposed left turn of the Morenoites was the performance of their supporters in the Simon Bolivar Brigade (SBB or SBIB, the ‘I’ is for ‘International’) during the Nicaragua civil war and after and the critical analysis of the whole affair made by the Morenoite Colombian section, the PST. This leftism, however, was a defence of the more left positions the USec (which then included the Morenoites) had had before 1979. In 1979 the USec began to oppose the construction of a section in Nicaragua, leaving the SBB high and dry and open to state repression.

The Sandinistas expelled the SBB from Nicaragua on 20 August 1979, with the support of the USec (and the WRP) also. This was one of the reasons Moreno split with the USec. The Lambertist and the Morenoites exploited this treachery to give a gloss to their unprincipled, and short lived fusion. However some correct transitional demands were made but the demand that could lead to state power for the working class, the governmental slogan, was wrong and confused.

It demanded ‘A Sandinista Government without the Bourgeoisie’, implying that the Sandinistas were some type of Mensheviks. Unfortunately the Sandinistas were simply
petty bourgeois and when the capitalists did indeed leave the government (having been invited in by the Sandinistas) the regime moved, not to expropriate the capitalists but to curb the workers and the revolution. Moreover the SBB was a group acting under the pressure of a revolution, whose inspiration did not reach Buenos Aires to alter the revisionism of the LIT in any substantial way.

The Belgium LOR, section of the LTT, comprehensibly exposed the accounts of their military exploits and political positions that Leon Perez wrote in Workers Press during the first half of 1987 as a tissue of lies, in a long document they wrote on the question in Autumn 1987; The Simon Bolivar Brigade: Questions for Comrade L Perez. These are just some of the main issues they take up. Perez claimed that the SBB were:

“Highly respected by all the combatants during the civil war, some observers give the credit for 10% of all military actions against the National Guard during the period between December 1978 and July 1979 to the SBIB... They bore the brunt of much of the fighting with the elite of National Guard forces” (Workers Press, 14.3.87)

Using the publications of the Colombian PST a section of the LIT, especially the book, ‘Nicaragua: Reforma 0 Revolucion?’ the LOR point out the SBB did not enter the fray in Nicaragua until 2 July 1989. The fighting was over by 17 July. The brigade lost three dead and three wounded. The brigade was 110 strong of which only 40 saw action and those as individual members of the FSLN (Sandinistas). It was not a Trotskyist brigade but it did contain Trotskyists within its ranks. The motivation for its formation came from the PST. All the lying and misrepresenting obscures the real lessons of the Nicaraguan revolution, in which the SBB was closer to the revolution than the LMR, a sympathising section of the USec or the Maoist MAP-FO.

The LOR relates from this source that the expulsion of the SBB was part of the disarming of the masses and the reconstruction of the bourgeois state. That a few months afterwards Thomas Bourge launched a campaign against ‘pseudo-revolutionaries’ which resulted in the arrest of 70 members of the MAP-FO, 5 of the LMR and a supporter of Moreno. Then they quote from a resolution of the CC of the PST, September 1979, published in the Special Bulletin of 21.11.79:

“Our political and organisational practice was characterised by a fundamental strategic error: after the overthrow of Samosa we did not adopt as the centre-piece of our policies the perspective that the FSLN would become the principle enemy of the Nicaraguan masses

We failed to recognise the bourgeois character of the government and the necessity to impel the mobilisation of the masses, to develop and to centralise the organs of dual power. We failed to insist on the decisive role of the working class and the necessity to stimulate its organisations in the unions and factory committees, we failed to call for the taking of the land and to support such actions and, above all, we failed to point out that it
was necessary to resist the disarming of the masses when the FSLN embarked on .......

All these aspects are the hallmark of centrist politics ... Moreover as a logical consequence we entertained illusions regarding the possibility that the FSLN, or one of its wings, would lead the revolutionary process through to a workers and peasants government ... They saw us as the ‘best of the FSLN etc.

Bill Hunter did a political dishonest thing at this time. A supporter of the USEc had written to Workers Press, opposing the SBB (and any other Trotskyists) fighting for socialist revolution against the Sandinistas. A MRCI supporter wrote in making some correct leftist criticisms of the Brigade’s politics. Hunter lumped the left and right together with bourgeois reaction and ‘those who attack the Simon Bolivar Brigade’ and for good measure demanded that the Workers Press in future cease publishing critical letters. It was in marked contrast to the attitude of the Colombian PST, referred to above, which made a long criticism of the SBB affair and sought to defend certain aspects the Trotskyist programme, at least.

The Special Congress in April

A Special Congress was called in April to ratify the new trajectory of the WRP towards unification with the LIT under the guise of the Preparatory Committee. Its outcome signified for me the end of any real hope of turning the party around. Chris Bailey believed this to be possible for some time after but had to admit defeat soon enough.

I have already described the treatment the Cambridge resolution got and it was perhaps with some surprise that Pilling and Slaughter found how well the right wing line, bordering on anti-communism, was received in the party. The Cambridge resolution was submitted as an alternative to the CC draft resolution. It, together with the revulsion at the right wing, chauvinist and Stalinophobic drift of the WRP was what drew the opposition together into the Internationalist Faction. It is important, therefore, to re-examine this resolution politically and this will be done in the last chapter.

The CC resolution had contradictory positions with a defence of many of the LIT’s Stalinophilic positions in order to cement that alliance and Stalinophobia in order to cement the alliance with Varga. However there was not a specific defence of the LIT’s Stalinophobia. It is difficult to imagine how the WRP leaders thought they could square this circle, especially as they included this in their resolution:

“We reject theories of ‘stages’ in the development of revolutionary leadership with their strategy of working for some intermediate or ‘transitional’ working class leadership which is not Stalinist, not reformist nor yet Trotskyist e.g. the Lambertist Movement for a Proletarian party.” (Or the Argentinian Movement for Socialism? GD)
And just to signal who was now running the show Pirani was forced to abandon an amendment he had got through the CC meeting directly before the Congress and reinstate the characterisation of Pabloism as ‘essentially the same as Stalinism’ when Slaughter arrived. As Stalinism was soon to be labelled ‘the most counter-revolutionary force in the planet’ by Pilling and Slaughter, Earnest Mandel now obviously outshone both Thatcher and Regan as World Public Enemy No.1 (or maybe No. 2 behind Gorbachev?)

I had produced two resolutions and a document for the Congress. I was perhaps wrong to withdraw my document characterising Pabloism as a capitulation to bourgeois ideology not simply to one of its forms, Stalinism. I did so in favour of the Cambridge resolution. The first of my resolutions was a plea for democratic rights and appealed against fusion with the Morenoites without an examination of their political line. It got only a handful of votes. The next resolution was on a condemnation of the Pearce letters and a demand for a retraction from Workers Press. As has already been explained in the section on Ireland it was manoeuvred off the agenda and was eventually defeated at the CC at the end of the year.

Yorkshire miner Dave Smith was the originator of the anticommunist line ‘Stalinism is the most counter-revolutionary force on the planet’ at the April conference. He was supported by Pilling and then by Slaughter. They were quite definite on what they meant and would book no arguments about Stalinism being the agent of imperialism, which obviously was the most counter-revolutionary force or even that Stalinism was the most counter-revolutionary force within the workers movement. This argument dragged on after the Congress with Tony Godfrey and Doug McEwen joining in support of me. After a heated meeting of the London District Committee Cyril Smith let the cat out of the bag.

“Of course it is wrong. But the point was to get Downing”.

Spoken like the man of the high political integrity and moral courage that you had always displayed in your relations with Healy, Cyril.

**Capitulated**

When I attacked the line of the MAS and read out the Workers Power article proving that the Morenoists capitulated to the Videla dictatorship after the 1976 coup in Argentina all hell broke loose. I was to prove the correctness of my statement to satisfaction of the Congress. This was impossible now as the method was simply to deny the truth of the allegation unless I could get hold of Cambio No. 1 which contained the damning quotations and whose existence Perez would not even admit. The named, dated and sourced quotation from Workers Power (sufficient proof for any objective audience) was not good enough. Despite writing to the Partido Obrera in Argentina and elsewhere I could not get a copy of Cambio No.1. The MAS, of course, would not supply one. I did, however, man-
The Press in Argentina 1973-78’ by Andrew Graham Yoll which proved its existence.

This is the entry on Cambio:

“Cambio: Nira Enrique (Ed.) Launched May 1976. Fortnightly which changed its name to La Yesca on its second issue. Was banned soon after. It was the result of a pooled effort by the Workers Socialist party and some left-wing Peronists.”

How vital the alliance with Moreno was and how desperate the leadership was to prevent any examination of the politics of the MAS was proved by the reaction to my speech on the 4th. On the morning of the 5th a CC was called before the conference. I attended but no other oppositionists came (there were four dissidents at the time, Dave Bruce, Chris Bailey, Richard Goldstein and myself).

I was subjected to a hysterical, howling attack by what I can only describe as a frenzied mob. Peter Gibson chaired and would not even allow me to defend myself. The North East led by Hughie Nicol produced a motion condemning me for distributing anti-party filth because I gave Lynn Beaton a copy of a document on the MAS written by the Workers Power co-thinkers in France. Pirani persuaded Nicol to withdraw his book-burning motion. Then Hunter produced his motion condemning me for my allegations, pointedly refusing to insert ‘comrade’ before my name. It is worth quoting the CC motion in full to see to what depths the party had now sunk, and what political method now dominated:

“This Conference condemns G Downing for his unsubstantiated slur on our Argentinean comrades who fought the coup of 1976. 49 of our comrades were assassinated by the death squads. Many more disappeared. Our comrades led and participated in hundreds of strikes against the coup. Many of the party died or were tortured in jail. Conference saluted those Trotskyist martyrs who died resisting oppression such as the British movement has never known, and makes an unqualified apology to the Argentinean comrade present at this conference.”

The Outcome of the Congress

This motion moved by Bill Hunter was a cowardly evasion of any political accounting of 1976. Note its pure Stalinist method. If the martyrdom of party members was the criterion of correctness how could Trotskyists have criticised the CP or the POUM in the Spanish Civil war? Only a handful of members voted against the motion, with no one speaking in my defence. Even some of those who were later to form the Internationalist Faction did not support me against the hysterical reaction. Only the liberal democrats in the party, like Geoff Barr, defended my right to my opinion. There was no political solidarity.

The most alarming thing about the Congress was not that Pilling, Smith, Slaughter and
Hunter were seen to hold reactionary views (or if not to hold them, which is worse) and use unprincipled methods (what, after all had they been doing under Healy?), but that the membership was almost totally cowed into accepting whatever the leadership threw at them and appeared to have lost all political independence from the Special Congress of 25 October 1985 and the Congresses of February, March and June 1986 where the proposals of the leadership were regularly overturned, to the positions where only a handful were prepared to fight for what they believed to be right we had come a long way. Who in the WRP believed the extreme right wing position that ‘Stalinism is the most counter-revolutionary force on the planet?’ yet how few were prepared to oppose it!

However questions were beginning to be asked. Geoff Barr produced a list of questions on the politics of the MAS, which had to be tackled later. Perez let me know something of his views of internal party democracy at the end of the debate:

“If I had you in my party I would deal with you, Downing” he hissed.

It is necessary here to make some estimate of how the Slaughter-Hunter- Pilling reactionary line carried so decisively at this Congress, despite its obvious stupidity and how the Cambridge motion was rubbished (it doesn’t mention Stalinism, it is therefore a capitulation to Stalinism was the line of attack) so easily and practically the entire Congress supported reaction. It must be said that the membership were weary of discussions without conclusions and if Bailey, Bruce or any other oppositionist only criticised negatively and did not propose an alternative then ‘all the old crap’ was bound to find its way back to the surface and the old Healyite methods were bound to re-emerge. Something has to fill a political vacuum.

The window of opportunity for regeneration was almost closed. As ever ‘democracy’ was no political match for reaction in a heated political battle. Surely this was the lesson of the 1974 split. The fact that the Thornett group produced perspectives, and they were quite entitled to co-operate with whomever in so doing, was what ensured the success of that split. This was to be proved again by the negative result of the Internationalist Faction’s failure to produce perspectives.

**Appendix 1**

‘Democratisation’, All Things to All Classes.

In Simon Pirani’s ‘Front of the People’ article on June 13 we are told that one of the slogans of the ‘MAS.’ in Argentina for the 1987 election campaign is ‘Democratisation of the armed forces, in such a way that they can no longer turn against the people.’ This slogan, without comment from Pirani, is a total repudiation of the Marxist conception of the state as developed by Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. The state consists, in essence, of armed bodies of men and their institutions, the courts, the Judiciary, parliament etc. It is the instrument
of repression of one class over another. A socialist revolution, to be successful must smash up this entire state apparatus and replace it the organs of rule of the working class in order to suppress the ruling class i.e. a workers state.

The Argentine army is a capitalist army. It is based on defence of private property and it is always therefore ‘turned against’ the working class. ‘People’ is a cross-class term, which signifies an alliance between classes. Lenin used it to signify an alliance between the workers and peasants in revolutionary Russia but Stalin always used it thereafter to signify the subordination of the working class to the national or ‘democratic’ bourgeoisie in popular fronts’ of ‘blocs of classes’.

What does ‘democratisation’ mean here? In the trade unions it means restoring to workers their rights to elect and control their leaders - correct as a transitional demand but impossible in the epoch of imperialist decay except under revolutionary leader-ship. What is not correct is to demand the capitalist class cease to be capitalist and a bourgeois army cease to be a bourgeois army and ‘not turn against the people’ as an army.

But perhaps by ‘democratisation’ is meant the right to freely elect officers (and generals?), the right of recall and abolition of the privileges of rank? Is it intended to be agitational and to stir up discontent in order to break it up and to bring some of it over to the side of the workers? Such hopes are forlorn if soviets and workers militias are not counterposed to the bourgeois army, in which case we would point to the coming revolution and the victory of socialism and the unreformable nature of all capitalist institutions.

“It can even take the army away from its reactionary officers. To accomplish this it is only necessary to seriously and courageously advance the program of the socialist revolution.” (Trotsky p 135, The Spanish Revolution.)

Mutineers face execution, a fate they will not risk for ‘democratisation’ or ‘not turning against the people’. In any case if this is the purpose of the tactic a slogan must be found to express this. A slogan that means all things to all classes is a confusionist, centrist slogan.

However the problem is far more serious than a mistaken slogan. To sow illusions that the bourgeois army in its entirety in Argentina can be won over to the side of the people is to repeat the Chile betrayal. General Vidal is a Pinochet in waiting. The Easter events were a ‘dry run’ for the real thing. The task of all revolutionaries in Argentina is to prepare the masses for this, to explain the nature of the capitalist state and to rally them to smash this state and this army when the time comes. A united front for a limited period on a military alliance to defeat this coup is obligatory on all workers parties. The WRP must not take the slogan of the right-centrist Militant as its own.
Chapter 10: Strange Bedfellows

“Your accusations are vile slanders and frame-ups - my slanders are justifiable retribution against the enemy for their crimes.”


Or how the WRP leaders lied and dissimulated to facilitate an unprincipled fusion.

The U.S. open Trotskyist conferences

The initial 7 point call of the WRP) Conference of 1-2 November 1986 and the subsequent 10 point call as prepared by Slaughter and sanctioned by the CC caused a great stir world-wide. The 7 point call of the conference were amended in a number of important respects by the CC so that the following were the points brought to the US by Chris Bailey:

1. The resolutions and theses of the first four congresses of the Comintern.

2. The Transitional Programme and the founding Conference of the Fourth International (1938);

3. The theory of Permanent Revolution;

4. The defence of the conquests of the October Revolution, the defence of the Soviet Union, the states of Eastern Europe, Vietnam, China and Cuba. The definition of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers’ state and of the Eastern European states, China and Vietnam as deformed workers’ states. (The WRP’s position on the character of the Cuban State is to be studied and reviewed.)

5. Defence of all national liberation movements and independent governments against attacks of imperialism despite the fundamental political differences between Trotskyism and these movements. In particular defence of those under direct attack and threat of intervention from imperialism (Nicaragua, Libya, Cuba, Mozambique. Angola, etc.)

6. The struggle against Stalinism and the bureaucracy and the rejection of all forms of capitulation to, or compromise with Stalinism and the support for the political revolution in the degenerated and deformed workers’ states;

7. Acceptance of the need for revolutionary parties as sections of the Fourth International based on the principle of democratic centralism in all countries.

I have explained the battle on point 7 and that the Trotskyist Revolutionary Conference in San Francisco on 6-7 December:

1986 was opposed to this clause, not because they disagreed with it, but because it would exclude the USec groups who might be won to consistent Trotskyism. The phrase “in all countries” was not in point 7 of the original resolution passed by the WRP Conference. Already the manoeuvring had begun! Chris Bailey, who represented the WRP at the US
Conference, fought against the inclusion of point 7 for the above reason and so did I. For a while Pirani also fought for this position, but we lost this vita argument. Nonetheless there was a great deal progressive left in the call for which to fight. The text accompanying the initial call proclaimed:

“The central purpose of the world conference will be to assist the process of theoretical clarification on the basis on which the Fourth International will be rebuilt and to identify the major issues in that clarification.”

The changes made to the call were decided by the alliances developed by Slaughter. The seven and later ten points were initially seen as a political platform on which to fight in the Open Conference. They successively became the basis for entry into the Preparatory Committee and finally the ‘minimum basis for discussion among Trotskyists’ on a motion from Cyril Smith al the CC in March. In other words, Slaughter, Varga and the Morenoites had spoken ‘ex cathedra’ and such divine revelation would book no opposition or questioning.

Alan Thornett also attended the US conference on behalf of the SG. It appears he was initially opposed to the form of the WRP’s 7 points, preferring the alternative version that was proposed by the Fourth International (rebuilt) [the La Verite group, which sought an open conference that did not exclude anybody that claimed to be a Trotskyist. However it seems that he was persuaded in the course of the Conference by his US supporters, the WSL, to vote for the conference called by the WRP minus pt. 7.

Permanente Revolution

He still supported, in actual fact, the ‘open conference’ position of the Trotskyist Organisation (TO: US sympathising section of the Fl [rebuilt]), which would allow in the entire USec, including the US SWP, who had renounced the theory of Permanent Revolution, as well as those who claimed to be Trotskyists but who had clearly broken from even a formal adherence to the Trotskyist Programme, like the British Militant or SWP. This represented an unwillingness by Thornett to fight for the expulsion of the US SWP from the USec, which he was in the process of joining.

Bailey recounts that the RWL complained that this produced a confused resolution that was muddling support for the WRP with the La Verite position. He wrongly reported that the RWL voted against the Conference resolution on an open conference. This supported the WRP’s call, with the exception of pt. 7.

This US Conference was the third in a series of conferences that brought together many of the small US Trotskyist groups and a few who were outside the Trotskyist tradition. The conference in December 1986 reflected the effect the WRP explosion had on Trotskyists worldwide. The majority of the debates were now on the crisis of the Fourth International, with real signs of progress in the readiness on many groups to abandon the narrow sectarian defence of their own organisation’s historical positions.

The US Conference followed one held in Los Angeles in 1984 at the invitation of the Morenoite International Workers party before the ISL split off) and another held in San Francisco in 1985 at the invitation of the Workers Socialist League (WSL), a group of some eight US followers of the British SG. The third conference was called by the WSL, the Freedom Socialist party (FSP, a large group of SWP origins) and the Internationalist Socialist League (Fourth International) [the other US Morenoite group. The RWL (US ITC
section), the Trotskyist Organisation (TO) US section of the FI (Rebuilt), the Proletarian Insurrectionist Tendency (Chilean centrist exile group connected with the Chilean MIR, which was of Trotskyist origin) and the SG. David Kerr, an ex-SWP member, was the neutral chairman.

The WRP was present as an observer. Other observers were the Bolshevik Tendency (BT, ex-Spartacist League), League for the

Revolutionary party (left state capitalist group), the Revolutionary Socialist League (New York based 1-don’t-know-who) and

Spark US sympathisers of the Lutte Ouvrière.

Those invited that did not attend included the Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency who regard themselves as the continuators of Trotskyism and do not want to bother with smaller Trotskyist ‘sects’. The SA are former US sympathisers of the IG and the Matti tendency, which is in the French LCR. They are now a separate Hansenite (Hansen was the leader of the US SWP from the early 60s to the late 70s) faction within USec.

At this early stage there was great confusion about how open the proposed international conference was to be. Did it allow in those who claimed to be Trotskyists but who clearly were not, like the US SWP or the British Militant? Did the WRP wish to have a conference that was open, within which they would fight for a platform or did they wish to frame their call in such a way as to pre-empt the Conference itself by the call and talk to only those with whom they agreed in advance? The former was my view, the view of the November Conference, of the US Conference and of Pirani too (cf. his stand to include USec groups at the December CC). The truth, as it emerged, was far worse. The cynical leaders of the WRP did not wish to have any real conference at all. Just a smoke-screen for an unprincipled fusion with the LIT, which they had secretly agreed in advance with Moreno.

The ‘Preparatory Committee in gestation

In January 1987 the WRP CC issued its ‘10 Point Call’, a reworking of the 7 points which was entitled ‘For the Reorganisation of the Fourth International’. The first point that was obviously wrong was the title. The WRP now viewed the crisis of the FI as simply organisational; simply getting together like-minded groups whom had already the correct policies. ‘Reorganisation’ rather then ‘re-generation’ or ‘rebuilding’ signified the intentions of the call. Rebuilding itself needs qualification as it has been used opportunistically by Lambert, in particular, as a formula for sectarian manoeuvres and raids into other groups, not principled political struggle and clarification.

In the preamble to the 10 points “Those who characterise the miners’ strike as a defeat for the working class are roundly condemned. The perspectives flowing from this form a suitable preparation for the call. Every strike and struggle forces the WRP to recognise that:

“This upsurge of the working class in a situation WITH NO WAY OUT EXCEPT PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION and the successful struggle for revolutionary leadership...”

Of course there is always a ‘way out’ of even the most revolutionary situations for the
capitalists, and always a few reforms available, even if only for a section of the working class (the Militant showed the ‘way out’ to the working class in Liverpool, thus abandoning the miners in struggle). This objectivism is the whole ideology behind the manoeuvres of the WRP and the LIT that have almost identical formulations for this. In other words the revolution is objectively upon us, we must hasten to get our act together and forget these very nasty questions of history to avoid internal conflict. Thus did Healy rule.

The postscript proposed the setting up of the Preparatory Committee;

‘This preparatory committee will produce documents for the conference (without in any way excluding presentation of other documents) and will organise as a matter of urgency the raising the necessary financial resources”.

The 10 Points were:

1. The resolutions and theses of the first four Congresses of the Third (Communist) International in all its essential strategic principles, in relation to: imperialism, the bourgeois state, democracy and reformism; problems of the taking of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat; the leading role of the proletariat in relation to the peasantry and struggles of the oppressed masses; soviets; work in trade unions; parliamentarism; united front policy.

2. The Transitional Programme and the Founding Conference of the Fourth International, based on the development of Bolshevik organisation and programme, made necessary by the ‘definitive passage of Stalinism to the side of the bourgeois order.’ We reaffirm on this basis the necessity of building the Fourth international, in opposition to all those who pronounce the Fourth International dead and proclaim the need for a ‘Fifth’ or new International.

The continuity of the Fourth International has been a contradictory process, but it consists in the struggle for the continuity of Bolshevism against Stalinism, and against the liquidationist revisionism which has transmitted this Stalinist pressure into the Trotskyist movement.

The same struggle has been necessary against liquidation into social-democracy and petty-bourgeois national movements. Social democracy has only retained any force in the working-class movement because of the destruction of the Communist International by Stalinism.

3. The theory of permanent revolution with the hegemony of the proletariat as its essential content. This means the leadership of the working class in the revolution in countries where revolutionary democratic tasks are posed, as well as in the advanced capitalist countries and the degenerated and deformed workers states.

It means that the democratic revolution ‘grows over’ into the socialist revolution un-
der proletarian leadership. It means the recognition that the taking of working-class power in any country is the basis of a social formation which is transitional to socialism, a transition which requires the victory of the socialist revolution in a number of advanced capitalist countries.

It means leadership of the working class by Bolshevik-type parties. It means rejection of revisionist theories which give priority to the national revolutionary struggles in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, or which have a perspective of different ‘epicentres of the world revolution - ‘sectors’ of the world revolution with separate programmes.

4. Defence of the conquests of the 1917 October revolution. Defence of the USSR and defence of the states of Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, etc. against imperialism and capitalist restoration. Definition of the USSR as a degenerated workers’ state and of the Eastern European states, China and Vietnam as deformed workers states. (The WRP’s position on Cuba to be urgently reviewed).

These states are not identified in their class nature with the Stalinist bureaucracy. This bureaucracy has no ‘dual nature’ but is parasitic on the workers’ state and is ‘counter-revolutionary through and through’.

Its international policy, executed through the Stalinist parties of the world as well as through the bureaucracy’s state agencies, betrays the proletarian revolution, perpetuates the imperialist encirclement, and thus endangers the conquests of October.

Against this, defence of the gains of October coincides directly with the world socialist revolution, a necessity flowing from the international nature of today’s economy and the struggles of the oppressed peoples all over the world.

From this derives the necessity of the Fourth International. Only the Fourth International, building on the struggle to continue and develop Bolshevism against the betrayals of Stalinism and its ‘socialism in one country’, can carry forward this task.

The defeat of imperialism requires a strategy and tactics of breaking the working class from the existing Stalinist and reformist leaderships, uniting it on the programme developed through a century of struggle for Marxism as the theory and practice of the proletarian revolution. That can not be carried out by spontaneously and empirically developing leaderships.

The development of the degenerated and deformed workers’ states, their bureaucracies and their national policies - even leading to war between them and the increasing pressure of imperialism upon them, have already given abundant proof of the falseness of the Stalinist illusions that imperialism would be driven into a corner and collapse, through the steady growth of the strength of ‘socialist’ states within their own borders, accompanied by the growth of ‘progressive forces’.
5. Defence of all national liberation movements and of states which have won their independence from imperialism, despite the political differences between Trotskyism and all bourgeois and petty bourgeois national movements.

In particular, defence of those under direct military attack or threat of military intervention from imperialism (Nicaragua, Cuba, Libya, Mozambique, Angola, etc.).

At the same time rejection of any formulas which imply leadership role for bourgeois or petty-bourgeois forces, or equality between them and the working class in the tradition of Stalin's 'bloc of four classes', as a liquidation of the political independence and political hegemony of the working class.

Rejection of any permanent or strategic alliance with bourgeois or petty bourgeois forces. This does not exclude joint action against imperialism, which are essential.

6. The struggle for the defeat of Stalinism and the bureaucracy and the rejection of all forms of capitulation to and compromise' with Stalinism, and the necessity for political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

Recognition of the Polish struggles of 1980-81 as the renewal of the struggle for political revolution, which reached high point in East Germany (1953) Hungary and Poland (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968). Defence of the revolutionary spontaneity of the Polish working class and of Solidarity, which it produced.

Against all conceptions such as 'national unity' (the Walensa leadership), 'self-management' (Mandel), social democracy (Lambert), which mean reconciling the working class to the Stalinist bureaucracy.

7. Re-affirmation of the Transitional Programme's demand for 'workers and peasant's governments'. The essence of this demand is to elaborate it as part of a programme of struggle to break with the treacherous reformist and Stalinist leaderships in the course of the preparation of the struggle for state power. Only in this sense does the demand addressed to these leaderships 'break with the bourgeoisie!' have a revolutionary content.

8. The struggle to build revolutionary parties of the working class, sections of the Fourth International, in every country organised on the principles of democratic centralism, and against all theories that revolutionary leadership passes to other, petty bourgeois or Stalinist forces or some 'transitional' form of working class leadership. Democratic centralism is opposed to all forms of bureaucratic centralism of the apparatus against the rank and file.

9. For methods of political struggle proved in the experience of the working class: against petty-bourgeois substitutes such as guerillaism, individual terrorism and 'single issue' politics. We defend those who fight the bourgeoisie with such methods, but we reject these methods.
10. Condemnation of the methods, inherited from Stalinism, of slanders, violence and frame-ups designed to silence and drive out political opponents. In particular, condemnation of the slanders used against M Varga (B. Nagy), J. Hansen, G. Novack, T. Wohlforth, N. Fields and R Napuri.

The CC voted against the ‘slander’ on R Napuri and Varga, having only Perez’s and Varga’s say so that these were slanders and never having seen any documents on the cases then or since.

International responses to the call: South America

Hunter’s December visit to Argentina gave Slaughter a new ally. The amazing conversions to the banner of Moreno of the visitors to the Argentine MAS and their new determination to crush and sweep aside all criticism of the nature of that organisation can only be explained by the total disorientation of the leading layers of the WRP in the previous period and the salvation now perceived in a big organisation with a strong leader. The dictum ‘to whom the power, to him the petty bourgeois’ was proving itself once more. Of course the LIT welcomed the call whole-heartedly, as it was mainly framed to flatter them.

Whilst in South America Hunter made contact with the Peruvian Communist League, who had repudiated the initial support for North given by their leading comrade. He found them in some considerable confusion, with much talk about a ‘mass international’ and the ‘unity of revolutionaries’. They had attempted to hold a national regroupment conference and were then about to regroup with the Revolutionary Workers party (RWP), which had been USec group. They were very distrustful of Hunter and felt that their delegate at the WRP November conference had been treated with contempt, as the Irish delegate had been.

They had made initial contact with the Peruvian Morenoite Socialist Workers party (PST) but found them too organisationally manoeuvres to work with. However they had proceeded with their plans for a national conference of Trotskyists, under the ‘Committee of Socialist Unification’ (CUT). They seem to have fused with the PRT. A Pre-Congress of the CUT, which now included the PST, issued a resolution on the WRP 10 Point Call on 28 March 1987. They declared for a ‘Mass Revolutionary International’ in point 3 of the resolution, a clear Pabloite Morenoite formulation. They recognised, in point 5 that:

“The WRP’s Call, in its second section entitled: “For an International Conference in 1987 for the Reorganisation of the Fourth International”, impedes the democratic participation of international organisations that legitimately belong to the Trotskyist movement”.

The resolution agreed to call for an open conference and wished to discuss the political revolution in China, Vietnam and the USSR.

The last point agreed:

‘To attend the International Conference called by the WRP in the spirit of accelerating the process of evaluation and discussion of the Trotskyist movement and in the struggle to unify those revolutionary forces against imperialism and Stalinism.
set up from the start on a far tighter basis than was appropriate for organising an open conference. Its founding documents made its appeal to all organisations basing themselves on the founding programme of the Fourth International, on its foundation in 1938 and its reorganisation in 1943-53, its continuity despite its dislocation in 1951-53 under the effect of Pabloite revisionism.”

**OCRFI**

In a letter to us (28 December 1979) they spelled it out; the Parity Committee was based the position that:

“The political continuity of the Fourth International has been preserved, through the struggles of the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI, the OCI/PCI’s international grouping of which Lambert was the head GD) and of the organisations and currents including the BF Morenoites GD) and LIT, which undertook the struggle against revisionism within the Unified Secretariat, despite whatever differences there might have been.’ 80 this was an ‘open’ discussion - open to all who accepted in advance that the OCRFI, BF and LIT all represented ‘the struggle against revisionism.”

He observes of all this:

“Anyway, the mutual laying of the hands of the continuity of Trotskyism between the LIT and the Lambertist lasted about a year, and was followed by a bitter split between the two tendencies, and we now find a similar laying of hands between the LIT and Varga and the WRP, who ‘were, in 1980, Lambert’s bitter enemies, and Lambert is retrospectively defrocked from his part in the continuity of the Fourth International.

In 1980, to join the international discussion between the OCI and the LIT it became a condition to recognise that they jointly represented the continuity of the Fourth International. To join the current discussion, it is obligatory to recognise that the LIT, Varga and the WRP jointly represent the continuity of Trotskyism against revisionism, and it is also required by inference, that in 1980 the OCI represented revisionism. The poor old LIT must have been terribly deceived by Lambertist revisionism in 1980!”

These documents from Collins certainly provided the WRP oppositionists with enough ammunition against the 10 Points. However democracy was very much part of Collins platform here and he seemed to want a regroupment of all Trotskyists with their current leadership. The political corruption of these ‘old Ayatollahs’ was not sufficiently appreciated by him it seems, nor that many political ‘errors’ of Trotskyist groups were, in fact, hardened class positions impervious to argument. However he is correct in seeing joint work as the necessary basis for a medium term project of fusion between those of similar Trotskyist positions. But most of the opponents of Slaughter only fought him with their own manoeuvres and did not wish to use the ammunition here provided. Their views of
the problems of the FI ‘were even more ‘democratic’ than Collins.

Hunter replied to the document in July with a personal attack on Collins and a long defence of the LIT that would only convince one of their own hacks.

**The Australian SLL**

The Australian SLL was really the only international IC affiliate to go through the same type of splits and re-examinations as the WRP and the signs were very positive for a long period. Following North’s intervention immediately before the October 1985 split he rallied the majority of the IC groups to him. They all manoeuvred desperately to prevent the type of explosion that had happened in the WRP and the calling into question of their own role in the degeneration of the IC.

Unlike in the US a real opposition did emerge in the SLL and after a sharp internal struggle, in which the SLL leadership under Nick Beams used all the old Healyite, bureaucratic methods, including forbidding the loyalist members to talk to the oppositionists under pain of expulsion, the split took place and the Communist League was founded. It had branches at one point in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

Andy Blunden wrote a good perspective document (8/12/86) even if it tended to be a little over optimistic on the possibilities opened up by Healy’s expulsion and a little soft on the USec. However in exposing the fraud of the IC tradition it was good, although it did not question the ‘orthodox’ version of the 1953 split. For instance it says in point 2.15 of the Introduction:

“Healy and Banda, who opposed Pablo’s capitulation to Stalinism in 1953, now repudiate that position and praise the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the basis of an objectivist conception of history.”

This leaves out of the question the fact that both Healy and Banda, together with James Cannon, had been the foremost supporters of Pablo’s policies of capitulation to Stalinism for a number of years before the split, and never made any political explanation for this. Indeed they were determined to avoid such an explanation by splitting without discussion, utilising the ‘Open letter’ tactic.

This 32-page document must have represented several months of hard work and discussion. This high-water mark of achievement of the CL seems to have been abandoned by all sides in the subsequent split and has disappeared without trace.

Gerry Beaton and many others made big developments but the process of re-examination of post-war Trotskyism also held the danger of a total renunciation of Trotskyism, if no new political perspectives and programme replaced the old ones that were rejected. This was the tension reflected in the very heated conflict that emerged between Phil Sandford and the editorial board of Socialist Press on the one hand and Beaton and the United Trotskyist Faction, mainly based in the Melbourne branch of the Communist League on the other. Sandford seemed genuinely to believe that the WRP was now serious about regenerating Trotskyism and that Moreno had supplied the missing ingredient.

With a base on the editorial board of the CL magazine, Socialist Press, the CL leadership, under Sandford, began to impose the new orthodoxy, particularly the WRP’s sycophantic line on the LIT. For instance the resolution of the National Committee in Sydney on 1
April was a classic of bureaucratic manoeuvre and signalled the end of the Australian ‘glasnost’. Point 5 was indeed astounding:

Membership of the CL is open to all who agree in principle with the 10 points of the WRP call and wish the CL to participate in the Preparatory Committee (of WRP).

Members who disagree but are presently members may remain.”

You would have to be very careful not to fall behind with your subs because once out you could not get back in if you did not agree with the WRP. When the LIT split with the WRP the CL went with the LIT, presumably because there was no one left who qualified to be in their own organisation.

Bill Stevens, of the International Labour Group (Newspaper, Socialist Voice), which is mainly based in Perth, wrote to the CL to invite the leadership to attend the Melbourne Conference of Trotskyists on 13 June. The ILO had been sympathetic to the IC. They had strongly opposed the tactics of Phil Sandford and the oppositionists in the SLL in handing over the Perth bookshop to the SLL in exchange for factional rights, which only lasted a few weeks in any case. The SLL had little support left in Perth and those who were now totally opposed to them had purchased the bookshop in the main.

The IW works within the Australian Labour party and had responded well to the call for an international conference. Its leading member, John Troy, had been an ALP MP in the Western Australian parliament. The CL had kept them at arm’s length, refusing them internal bulletins at the beginning and then supplying censored copies. The CL leadership did not attend the Conference, they had saved their own souls now.

The other groups of interest in Australia were the Solidarity and the Spark groups. The former were USec supporters, the remnants of the Australian SWP, who had liquidated into Stalinism. It was quite a small group and also supported the idea of an international conference.

The Spark, whose leading member was Paddy Collins, had had long ties with the IC. They have big support in the Sydney waterfront and in the nurses union. All groups and individuals that had initially supported the Call apart from the CL were repelled by the cynicism of the WRP manoeuvres. At least two Australian conferences took place but the collapse on the inter-national project took its toll here too and as far as I know these conferences are now finished. Sandford and his followers in the CL went with the LIT in the split. Even here the poisonous politics Slaughter was to wreck havoc. After that criminally cynical exercise it may be many years before such an opportunity to tackle the problems of disparate but sincere Trotskyist groups on such a scale emerges again.

The Era of Manoeuvres

Chris Bailey, Dave Bruce and Cliff Slaughter attended the Perugia Conference of small, mainly European Trotskyist groups in Italy at the end of 1986. Here Slaughter attempted the first of his many manoeuvres. He attempted to form a common tendency with the GOR, the GOCQI and the RWP of Sri Lanka. Bailey claims he scuppered this attempt in favour of a series of monthly meetings with the GOR and the GOCQI. It is questionable whose manoeuvre it was in the light of the ‘Paris agreement’ outlined below.

Slaughter then went to France with Dave Bruce on 1 February and they signed an agreement for a left block at the conference with the GOR (who also signed for the RWP of Sri
Lanka) and Varga’s GOCQI, conferring on each other the title of continuators of Trotskyism and pledging exclusion of all the USec (Pabloite) groups. It is reproduced at the end of this chapter. Slaughter brought this document back to the CC and recommended that the CC reject his agreement, without discussion, almost before the ink was dry on his own signature. Obviously this was because Perez did not approve. He too demanded the title of continuator.

It must be said that this was a manoeuverist document. There was, in reality, very little political agreement between the signatories, and its main function was to avoid discussion by forming a mutual non-aggression pact rather than to develop discussion.

Point 3 defined the IC as the continuity of Trotskyism:

“Even though with weakness and contradictions, against Pabloism up to the Point of its abandonment by Healy in 1971 and its dissolution by Lambert in 1972. This continuity was maintained by various groups, organisations, centres and fractions which fought Pabloism. Contributing to the maintenance of this continuity were: the Group of Opposition and Continuity of the FI (Varga’s GOCQI GD), the GOR, the RWP of Sri Lanka, (who had been in the USec during this entire period GD), members and fractions of Healy’s WRP and IC who fought against and expelled Healy, Banda, (in 1985 but not in 1974, GD) etc., etc.”

Point 4 said:

‘The organisations signing this declaration decide to join the committee to prepare the Conference and call on all other groups and organisations claiming to be Trotskyist to join this Preparatory Committee on the basis of this declaration and the Call made by the WRP’.

**Perez going Crazy**

If it were approved, this document would have severely limited the value of the Conference as an open conference. But it would have killed it in its tracks as a fusion conference. It might have excluded even the LIT. We can see Perez going crazy on reading it: “Ubi est LIT?” we can imagine him asking. What had happened was a left wing non-aggression pact at the proposed open conference was scuppered and a right wing non-aggression pact between the WRP and the LIT was coming into being to allow a fusion at a closed conference. And Varga had to prostitute whatever political principles he had to agree to this.

To achieve this the LIT needed a piece of the continuity. This is how that particular circle was squared. You see, as Moreno initially supported the IC in 1953 that made him continuous (though he had liquidated into Peronism and began publishing his newspaper with ‘Under the discipline of General Peron’ on its masthead just two years later).

Now when he entered the USec in 1964 it wasn’t a capitulation to Pabloism as it was for everybody else who did this. He had fought the liquidationism of Mandel in alliance with Joseph Hansen on the question of guerrillaism, according to Slaughter. In fact this opposition was not from a Trotskyist standpoint at all but was a right wing capitulation to the
power of the state and petty bourgeois public opinion just as it was for Healy with the IRA. Despite the anti-Marxist position of the guerillaists they were definitely to the left of these ‘Legal Marxists’ on the issue of courageous opposition to the capitalist state.

Moreno had supported guerillaism up to the point when a group of Trotskyists in Argentina, the ERP/PRT, split from his organisation and actually engaged in armed struggle. His lieutenant, Juan Carlos Coral, co-signed a resolution with the CP and six bourgeois parties in front of Peron on 21 March 1974 defending the institutions of the capitalist state. The PST denounced their ex-comrades, the ERP/PRP in their Press ‘Avanzada Socialista’ on 10 October 1974 in the following terms:

‘The second threat is represented by a growing militarisation of political life prompted fundamentally by the terrorists activities of the guerrillas and their mirror image - the terrorists of the AMA and other organisations of the ultra-right.’

This invited state repression on these misguided revolutionaries, just as Healy did on the IRA. Hansen was engaged in the ‘Bring our Boys Home’ chauvinist anti-Vietnam war campaign and the ‘Fair Play for Cuba’ committees and did not wish to distress his middle class allies by supporting guerrillas. So much for continuity! It goes without saying that all WRP leaders were aware of these events, or could have easily found them out.

These ridiculous convolutions to prove Moreno’s continuity of Trotskyism could only make any independent minded Trotskyist laugh. Mandel frequently attacked him from the left. He had to be threatened with expulsion from the USec in 1974 before he withdrew his support for Peron. How had Slaughter known his group so well to chance this blatant evasion? The truth is that he played it by ear, he ‘felt them out and pushed them as far right as they would go.

‘Fourth Internationalist’ criticise the LIT

In the midst of all this the Internationalist Faction was quite heartened to read a critique of the LIT manifesto from some ‘Fourth Internationalists’. But we were very disappointed to learn of the manner they had intervened in the WRP branches that were wavering in the run up to the Ninth Congress. They were taken around by the WRP and produced a letter to the members, which basically said: ‘don’t listen to what the oppositions are saying, think of why they are saying it. They want to smash up the party, stay loyal!’

In later conversations they admitted that they regretted this action. The observations they made of the branches were interesting. None of them had any revolutionary practice or direction. Slaughter was nothing like a revolutionary leader. He did not regularly attend the party centre or bother with detailed caucusing on the tactics of this or that intervention in the working class or labour movement. He just arrived for meetings, pontificated on the general principles of Trotskyism and returned a month or so later to repeat the exercise.

Their critique of the LIT manifesto was a strange document. It took the Manifesto at face value, without seeming to have any knowledge of the history or political leanings of the Morenoites.

It was honest but naive. It stood in sharp contrast to the WRP leadership, who knew exactly what the LIT stood for, and where it was going, but lied and obfuscated about it. It was a pity the document was not followed up at the time. It could have changed the rela-
tionship of forces in the WRP. At any rate it was probably one of the factors that stirred the conscience of Cyril Smith or rather made him see that he could not get away with this pig’s ear of a political fusion.

The critique asserts that ‘revolutionary enthusiasm’ is no substitute for an ‘objective analysis’ of the world situation. It says:

‘Trotskyists always insisted that a programme of the working class must have its point of departure in the prevailing objective conditions. This meant, first and foremost an analysis of the economic situation as the basis for the class which was taking place. In insisting on such an approach Trotsky was being consistent with the fundamental teachings of Marxism (and which distinguished it from all other world views) that it is the material conditions under which people live that in the final analysis determine their consciousness’.

Ex-supporters of Gerry Healy should have no difficulty in identifying the International Committee’s objectivism in these lines. The phrase ‘in the final analysis’ is what skips over the whole of the Marxist dialectic that explains just how being does determine consciousness. It is not at all in the ‘mirror image’ way as it is presented here. I can recommend a study of the contributions of Dave Bruce and Chris Bailey and the section on Ireland, to tackle this as well as ‘Socialism, Utopian and Scientific.’

The rigid application of theories of economic catastrophe, as well as those of the ‘weakest link’ always ignore the subjective factor, the fact that a Trotskyist party is not just a desirable thing to boost the objectively advancing revolution but its absence guarantees the defeat of the revolution, no matter how the masses fight. In ‘whither France’ Trotsky advances the proposition that revolutionary situations do not drop from the sky, that the revolutionary party itself plays the key role in advancing a pre-revolutionary situation to a revolutionary situation by its agitation and propaganda and winning of the vanguard to its programme of transitional demands. There is, he says, a ‘reciprocal relationship’ between the subjective and the objective. This has been analysed in the section on Ireland.

In the remaining portion of the document the politics of the LIT is ripped apart comprehensively, though naively. For instance it questions the formulation ‘For a Workers’ Peas-ants and Popular Alliance’ without seeming to be aware that this is the rational for all types of popular Fronts in Latin America, for instance with the Zapatist Workers party in Mexico and the 23 point programmatic ‘Peoples Front’ with the Stalinists and small bourgeois groupings in Argentina. Perhaps the comrades had not seen what I and half the movements claiming the name of Trotskyism in the world had written about Moreno, or else believed Cliff Slaughter that these were mere slanders.

They are very clear on what the Fourth International should be (Trotskyist only) and they finish the piece by hoping the LIT will play a leading role in reconstructing the Fourth International.

Appendix 1

This is the full text of the “Paris Agreement”.

February 1st 1987
The following declaration was voted by a meeting between Comrade MP of the GOR (Italy), comrades of the Group of Opposition and Continuity (E. Europe, France), and DB and CS WRP

1. The GOR, the RWP of Sri Lanka, the Group of Opposition and Continuity, salute the call issued by the WRP for a “conference in 1987 for the reorganisation of the FI”

2. The WRP, the RWP, the GOR and the Group of Opposition and Continuity resolve to prepare the Conference together on the following basis: (a) the solution of the crisis of the FI. is necessary against the attempts to liquidate it by centrism, which exerts the same politics in various forms, namely, to transmit the pressure of Stalinism on the FI. It is a matter in the first place of Pabloism, the USec (and other international tendencies: Lambert, Healy, Robertson, etc.) which relay and even amplify the attempt of Stalinism to destroy the FI. It goes without saying that we do not place an equals sign between (the Pabloite leaderships and) the many members of the USec and other centrist organisations which seek the path to the Fourth International and see the liquidationist character of the centrist leaderships. We appeal to these comrades to join the fight to reorganise the FI. against liquidationist revisionism. The reorganisation of the FI. is possible today, because it rests upon and is at the same time an element of the new upsurge of the working class in East and West. The crisis of the centrist organisations is caused by this step forward in the class struggle.

3. Despite its crisis and its dislocation as a centralised international organisation by Pabloism, the FI. is not dead, because its continuity was maintained by the flight organised by the International Committee, even though with weaknesses and contradictions, against Pabloism, up to the point of its abandonment by Healy in 1971 and its dissolution by Lambert in 1972. This continuity was maintained by various groups, organisations, centres and fractions which fought Pabloism. Contributing to the maintenance of this continuity were: the Group of Opposition and Continuity of the FI., the GOR, the RWP of Sri Lanka, members and fractions of the WRP and Healy’s IC who fought against and expelled Healy, Banda, etc, etc. It is on the basis of the totality of this struggle that it is possible and necessary to reorganise the FI.

4. The organisations signing this declaration decide to join the committee to prepare the Conference and call upon all other groups and organisations claiming to be Trotskyist to join this preparatory committee on the basis of this declaration and the Call made by the WRP.
Chapter 11: Wasted Journeys

‘There’s plenty of boys that will come hankering and gruvelling around you when you’ve got an apple, and beg the core off you; but when they’ve got one and you beg for the core and remind them how you gave them a core one time, they make a mouth at you and say thank you ‘most to death, but their ain’t-a-going to be no core.’

Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer Abroad.

Or how the WRP leaders took advantage of the sympathy and co-operation of groups from all over the world to reinstate themselves politically in the eyes of their membership and then cynically rejected their former friends for narrow, sectarian advantage.

The response to the WRP’s call for groups to join the Preparatory Committee was widespread and many groups internationally answered. The first meeting took place a week after the party Congress, on the 11th/12th of April. Various groups were excluded before hand on the arbitrary edict of the WRP. These included the Socialist Organiser, Workers Power and the Social-1st Group. The WRP had initially been closest to the last two groups and they might therefore have posed the biggest threat to the WRP leadership.

Those groups who did receive an invitation came from Italy, San Francisco, France etc. On arrival they found that the p~, in whose formation they came to participate had already been formed in secret by the WRP, the LIT and the GOCQI. An eleventh point had been added at the beginning of April. Groups had to agree that everyone in attendance in the meeting constituted the continuity of Trotskyism. General Peron notwithstanding. And even then Perez and Bob Archer had to decide if they really meant it and. if that did not work, other excuse were found.

The Gruppo Operaio Revoluzionarlo (Gor) are Excluded

The GOR were furious that themselves and their co-thinkers, the RWP of Sri Lanka, were being excluded and at Varga’s treachery in this matter and responded with a letter to the PreC on 23 April:

‘We strongly protest at the methods you devised in order to exclude us from the Committee itself, a method which consisted in asking us to sign a statement which plainly defined the Morenoite LIT as a principled orthodox Trotskyist organisation. It is clear that to accept such a preliminary condition would have meant to sign a ‘non aggression pact’ with the LIT and to take upon ourselves a responsibility for their past and present misdeeds. We state again that in our view this is a Mafia type method.”

The full GOR report gives the details of the machinations of the WRP leaders and Perez. They initially tried to exclude the GOR on the pretext that they had written an article accusing the Peruvian Morenoites of signing an agreement with the Maoist guerrillas ‘Sendero Luminoso’, thereby endangering the security of the LIT. The GOR report says:
“Our delegation vehemently rose up against such a false, stupid and framed-up charge. It asked for seeing such an improbable article and demanded a direct and immediate debate with those who had resorted to such a bastard trick. Thus the manoeuvre framed by the LIT... miserably failed.”

The WRP then attempted to get the GOR to sign three different versions of a statement recognising the LIT as the continuity of Trotskyism. They were excluded several hours later, having refused to sign these documents. They left an escape rout open for themselves by not signing the Open Letter of excluded organisations. The GOR made clear that they were willing to accept the 10 point call as a basis for the Preparatory Committee, leaving the Conference itself open. It is clear that they either did not understand or had agreed to compromise with the basic motivation behind the 10 points; to justify the political lines and histories of the WRP, the LIT and the GOCQI and to close down political debate and clarification on these issues. They too were displaying a manoeuverist approach to rebuilding the Fourth International.

The Open Letter was signed by the ITC, MRCI, Workers Fight (GB) socialist Fight (Australia) WSL (USA) and the SG (GB). This said, in part:

‘Unfortunately the leadership of the WRP and the LIT representative opposed the participation of our tendencies and, furthermore, put new conditions for participation in the Preparatory Committee as well as excluding any organisation from observer status. This method of adding new conditions by the WRP Political and Central Committees was aimed at excluding all who had differences with them. This method of ‘opening up’ the discussion and work for the International Conference in our view negates the building of genuine support for the world conference.

**The International Trotskyist Committee Responds**

Dave Temple, who went around to the waiting delegations with bits of paper in his hand, trying to match up the delegations with the exclusion excuses, had told the ITC of the reason for their exclusion. He managed to cock it up completely. The ITC were told they were excluded because he thought they might be the group who had a position of a “dual nature of Stalinism”. This was clearly part of the charge (false) he was supposed to lay against the Fl (rebuilt). He had obviously forgotten the reason he was supposed to give for the exclusion of the ITC it was so spurious.

The ITC sent a letter on 18 April. It basically dissects the whole fraud. This is the full text of the ITC’s reply to the WRP,

Dear Comrades,

As you are aware the International Trotskyist Committee made a serious and positive response to the call for an international conference and indicated our intention to participate in its preparation. We are therefore concerned at the way in which the WRP (and other organisations now constituting the preparatory committee) have approached
the question of the conference. In particular we express our gravest concern at the exclusion from the committee of a considerable number of groups which had supported the call - including our own organisation.

The positive character of the call was its recognition of the deep crisis of the Fourth International and the need for “An intensive struggle to carry the present tasks of Trotskyism the nature of the objective situation, and the balance sheet of our past experiences in the material context of the international class struggle in its development.” We regret that the WRP leadership has been unable to develop this process. The crisis of the Fourth International cannot be resolved by manoeuvres, diplomacy or unprincipled fusions. The depth of the crisis demands a thorough theoretical and political clarification, which is impossible without an open discussion in which we can engage the widest possible forces identify with Trotskyism. This is not a luxury; it is essential to the reconstruction of the Fourth International. Any fusion on any other basis will only contribute to the crisis, not to its resolution.

This was the view taken by the US Trotskyist/Revolutionary Socialist Conference in San Francisco in December. A comrade of the WRP, present as an observer, put before this conference a statement which correctly identified the central purpose of an international conference as the “Fight for clarification of the theoretical and programmatic questions.” The first six criteria for the conference were a broad statement of the basis for participation; the Transitional Programme; the theory of Permanent Revolution; the defence of the degenerated and deformed workers’ states and the necessity of political revolution in these countries; defence of the struggles of the neo-colonial countries and their peoples against Imperialism.

The San Francisco meeting voted to support an international conference on this basis, but without the seventh criterion in the statement: “Acceptance of the need for revolutionary parties and sections of the Fourth International... in all countries.” This would have allowed for a conference of those forces identifying with Trotskyism, and those forces alone, while not excluding any of them. This view has since been reiterated in the letter of 29th March to the London meeting from three US Trotskyist organisations: the Revolutionary Workers League, US sympathising section of the ITC, the Trotskyist Organisation, US sympathising section of the Fourth International (Reconstructed); the Workers’ Socialist League/US. In these organisations called for the preparations committee “Open to tendencies identifying with Trotskyism that want to build and participate in the international conference...”

Let us make it quite clear that the ITC thinks it is essential to build Trotskyist parties in all countries. However the only purpose of this criteria was to exclude the USFI, using its position against building sections in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The USFI’s position is revisionist, certainly, but no more revisionist than the call in the Manifesto of the Morenoite LIT for the building of a Fourth International in which Trotskyists will be a small minority. We are against the exclusion of either of these important tendencies identifying with Trotskyism.
Unfortunately the Call issued by the WRP in January contained several elements which indicated that the leadership was moving further away from genuine international discussion. It contained a clear concession to the view that the continuity of the Fourth International runs through the International Committee - the assertion that ‘This (overcoming the crisis of the Fl) is the process which was begun by the International Committee in 1953’.

Moreover it included Ten Points which represented a significant change from the WRP statement at the San Francisco conference. As criteria for participation in the conference or the preparatory committee the Ten Points were much more restrictive. There are in any case important problems with the Ten Points; there are real political dangers in their one-sided treatment of Stalinism and revisionism, of “Petit-bourgeois substitutes” and “single-issue politics”.

The Call fudged the issue of whether or not these points were criteria for participation. They were introduced as principles which the WRP would fight to defend in the conference, but they were immediately followed by the sentence “The WRP calls upon all Trotskyist organisations to participate in a Conference on this basis...” The ITC made it clear that, with the above reservations, while we broadly agree with the Ten Points, we were totally opposed to their use as criteria for participation in the conference or the preparatory committee.

The WRP’s letter of 23rd March made it explicit that agreement with the Ten Points was to be the criterion for participation in the committee, to be constituted at a meeting on 11th /12th April (and incidentally what serious political leadership sends out letters convening an international meeting with nineteen days to spare?). A further letter of 1st April – ten days before the meeting – changed “A meeting to constitute the Preparatory Committee” to “The first meeting of the Preparatory Committee” and added new and largely meaningless conditions.

On the 11th April the majority of those groups (which had not already been excluded by telephone, like the SG, Workers Power and Socialist Organiser GD) were excluded by the committee already established by the WRP, the LIT and the Group of Opposition and Continuity of the Fourth International associated with Michel Varga. The reasons given for exclusion were generally irrelevant or inaccurate. The only serious comment made, and it was made several times to different groups, was that they had “a different conception” of the conference from the WRP.

On the evidence of the behaviour of the WRP leadership, the ITC has to conclude that we do indeed have different conceptions. The WRP leadership does not appear to have a conception of open Trotskyist discussion as the means to struggle for political clarification. For all its continued philosophical Posturing it is deeply contemptuous of theory; it does not recognise the need for theoretical and political regeneration of the Fourth International. It relies increasingly, and demagogically, on Stalinophobia and Pablophobia - the view that Stalinism (not Imperialism) is the major counter-revolutionary force in the World and, as stated in the main resolution of the WRP’s April
Special Congress, “the content of Pabloism was essentially the same as Stalinism”. It combines this with a highly subjective notion of continuity through the International Committee, explicitly stated in the same Special Congress resolution. It has used these un-Marxist arguments to cover its manoeuvres with the LIT on the one hand, and on the other hand in a very different fashion with the Varga group - and also with the Italian GOR, which has now been ditched altogether because of its correct criticism of the LIT

Behind all these manoeuvres, of course, there is the involvement of the LIT leadership, and its desire to bring about a unification of the WRP with its own current, by preventing the development of a healthy open discussion and a serious discussion of the crisis of the Fourth International. Hence the emphasis on the size of the LIT and the extreme hostility to any examination of its history or present politics.

The leaders of the WRP unfortunately see their relationship with the ‘big’ LIT as bolstering their position in Britain. In this context manoeuvres and arbitrary exclusions are not accidental, but necessary in order to carry out an unprincipled fusion against the striving (within the WRP and in other organisations) for a genuine process of political regeneration. It is not the first time that this has happened. The experience of 1979-80, when the Parity Commission was used to prevent a real Open Conference and set up an unprincipled fusion between the Morenoite and Lambertist organisations, which collapsed within a year must be taken as a serious warning by all members of the WRP.

The claim that the international conference will be open while the preparatory committee is dosed is patently absurd. At the most this will mean that anyone who wants to can sit in on the declaration of a ‘new tendency’ by the LIT and the WRP. Whether such a tendency will be based on the manifesto of the LIT or the totally inadequate Ten points or some amalgam of the two, it is clear from the method being perused by the WRP leadership and the Preparatory Committee that this can only be another unprincipled fusion which will prepare further confused splits.

These methods are not the way to resolve the crisis of the Fourth International. They will objectively deepen the crisis. We call on the WRP to break from the method of manoeuvres and fight for genuine political discussion - to reverse the present course while it still has the opportunity. The ITC is committed to doing everything in its power to advance this process.

18 April 1987

Communist Greetings Tony Gard, For the International Trotskyist Committee

A few of the International delegates were given £20.00 between them by Dot Gibson to see the sights of London while their fate was being decided. They had to return home disappointed after these wasted journeys. Even Lynn Beaton was refused observer status on behalf of the Australian CL, as they had not yet grovelled sufficiently to Perez.
The Socialist Group Responds

The Socialist Group produced a pamphlet on the International Conference in February. This was used as an excuse for denying them entry to the Preparatory Committee because it disagreed with the 10 Points, though Alan Thornett brought the official response of the group to the first meeting. The pamphlet was written by John L. and was quite soft on Moreno, though it pointed to many areas of disagreement with the politics of the LIT. In particular what outraged John L was the appalling hypocrisy of the WRP leadership,

“They say there is none so zealous as a repentant sinner: But the hypocrisy of the WRP struggling to keep out other tendencies by laying dawn such detailed political preconditions for participation in the political debate is breathtaking. Who can be impressed by the resolution’s sweeping three word dismissals of what the WRP) believes to be the position of the USFI and Lambert on Poland?

These sideswipes - with many more implied - run alongside insistence upon the need to build “revolutionary parties in every country”. Yet who is making this demand? The WRP, which only eighteen months ago itself tail ended Vietnamese Stalinism and Gaddafi’s Libyan regime, and still has no position on the character of the Cuban State and its leadership... The political reconstruction of the Fourth International is a qualitative political task, involving the reworking of the 1938 Transitional Programme and the fight for an objective appraisal by all Trotskyist currents of the lessons of the past fifty years of class struggle. To prejudge the results of this process is to kill it.

A long article is then appended; ‘Political Answers Needed to Crisis of the Trotskyist Movement.’ The basis theme of this is to regard the problems as those pertaining to the ‘Trotskyist Family’ who have drifted apart due to:

“Introspective, misguided, defensive attitudes towards past experiences (in which every current has shared in the errors that have been made), and the haste with which each current has rushed to denounce rivals, indicating a sectarian fixation on presenting the narrow interests of the leadership elements of a grouping, rather than any feeling of urgency to resolve the political problems in constructing a Marxist leadership of and for the working class.

The same sectarianism, coupled with the development in some large groupings of a fixed hierarchy of quasi-bureaucratic leaders and mini cults of personality, explain the frequent resorts in the post-war movement to organisational means to muzzle discussion and tendency struggles in organisations which present themselves as “Bolsheviks”.

It must be said that to present the problems of the Fourth International as if they were the result of the misguided actions of “quasi-bureaucratic leaders” who only needed their heads knocking together is a dangerous perspective that can only lead to ever greater adoptions to these “leaders” in order to get their ear. Given the almost total cynicism of most of them, only opportunist regroupment would suit them.
The other excluded group to act in a peculiar way was the Fourth International (rebuilt) and the Trotskyist Organisation (TO), their US sympathising group. They continued to curry favour with the WRP in an unprincipled manner for a considerable time after and did not sign the Open Letter either. They felt themselves to be very close to the WRP leadership. Stefan Bekier, a leader of their Polish section, had done a speaking tour of the British coalfields in collaboration with the WRP miners, and Dave Temple, WRP CC and Durham Mechanics leader, had done a Spanish tour with a delegation from the NUM, organised by the PORE, Spanish section of the FI (rebuilt), to win support for the sacked and jailed miners.

Their delegates had specific instructions not to form any alliance with other groups against the WRP. They had agreed with every new condition imposed by the WRP, being very careful to ascertain in advance that they would be admitted to the Committee. Leon Perez excluded them, personally, because Margaret Guttshall did not pass his interview test on arrival in Britain. They protested vehemently and the unfortunate Bob Archer was given the task of explaining away the appalling opportunism of the WRP, who were not even asked their opinion on the exclusion by Perez. His letter of explanation could only say that they were excluded because:

“... The WRP expressed reservations about some of the criticisms in your publications of the Call for an International Conference” and that they proposed that they should participate as observers in the Committee... however, those present decided that there should be no observers.” (i.e. they were excluded because they were excluded GD). Chris Bailey takes these points up later.

It is necessary to discuss here the split that took place within the FI (rebuilt) at the end of 1987 and the start of 1988. This was the result of the support given by David Assouline, the leaders of the French section, the LOR, and the majority of that organisation, to the ‘renovateur’ candidate, Pierre Juquin, in the French Presidential election of 1988. This candidate was an ex-CP populist demagogue. The current emerged within and split from the French CP because of the electoral devastation suffered by the FCP due to its participation in the government of Mitterand and the consequent responsibility it had to take for the Thatcherite attacks on workers living standards. The renovateurs were pushing some very right-wing policies, including import controls.

The French USec group, the LCR, also endorsed this candidate. The Matti tendency (the Workers Unity Tendency), which is within the LCR and has clear Lambertist leanings, also supported Juquin but the Matti tendency, containing 10 CC members and 10% of the party, formed themselves into a faction to oppose the opportunist tactic. The British co-thinkers of the Matti group, the ISO, also indicated support for Juquin. As the report back to the ISO from the June 1987 IEC of the USec said:

‘The perspective exists for the creation of a new party of the left in which the LCR could play a decisive political role... Nevertheless (despite difficulties GD) such a decisive turn
towards the renovateurs is completely correct, irrespective of the eventual outcome. It is what our parties in large measure exist for - to link up with such developments from the mass parties”.

We might ask: were the ‘renovateurs’ the political precedent for the Socialist Movement? The LCR staffed and organised the electoral campaign of a supposed centrist group which wound up with less than the LCR would have got had they stood on their own programme. Again the old Mandelite/Lambertist project of creating and sustaining a centrist sea for the Trotskyist fish to swim in was revealed as farce when Juquin got a derisory number of votes, almost the same as the Lutte Ouvriere candidate, who stood on a far more left wing programme.

**Contempt for smaller groups, opportunist awe of bigger groups**

The LOR majority then liquidated into that USec group and a split was acknowledged at the extraordinary Congress of the Fl (re-built) in Barcelona on 1-2-3 January 1988. One of the main points of difference was the nature of the open conference call, with the majority seeming to have come around to the position that a platform had to be fought for within this conference and the liquidationists wishing only a fusion conference. However some problems seem to remain on the Ramos position, chief among them the idea that only principled regroupment and splits were necessary and they had nothing to learn politically or theoretically from other groups (even after their split). Hence the contempt they treated groups smaller than themselves and their opportunist awe of bigger groups.

The main section of the International is now the Spanish PORE whose leader is A. Ramos. Its HQ is in Barcelona and its newspaper is La Aurora. This Congress did reaffirm certain basis Trotskyists principles against the liquidationists. They were forced to acknowledge that their perspectives, adopted in 1976, of having solved all outstanding theoretical problems of Trotskyism and having rebuilt the Fourth International, politically, so that now the sole remaining task was to recruit to their ranks, was fundamentally false. They therefore changed the name of their international grouping to the International League (for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International), and pledged to adopt a more serious orientation to the USec. What this is difficult to say, as the basis for the entry of their US section, the TO, into Socialist Action is confused, to say the least. For instance they gave a very formal, off putting reply to the invitation of the GOR to discuss with them. Their extreme dogmatic defence of the IC tradition proved no substitute for Marxist analysis. This group, having been bitterly disappointed in the WRP’s call, now seems to have grown more isolationist and inward-looking.

TO member Kevin FitzPatrick’s article on ‘The International Committee in the United States’ from their magazine Truth 215, December 1986 and circulated by them in the WRP in mid 1987 contains the essence of the very confused positions of the group on the crisis of Trotskyism. That the continuity of Trotskyism runs through the IC is taken as dogma and facts are twisted to prove this. There is no evaluation of the SWP before the 1953 split, no substantive criticism of the IC after the split, assertion of the essential correctness of
Healy against Hansen in 1963 and an endorsement of the tactics of Wohlforth in the opposition to the SWP’s ‘Cuba turn’ in the early 1960s. Whilst he tells us that Robertson, now leader of the ‘Sparts’ and Harry Turner, now leader of the Morenoite ISL, betrayed the IC by collaborating with Hansen in the production of the pamphlet Healy ‘Reconstructs’ the Fourth International’ by supplying him with internal documents (which obviously were never meant to see the light of day) he does not tell us that Wohlforth, acting on Healy’s instructions, supported the SWP in expelling Robertson.

**Dubsequent development of the Workers League**

He makes some good points on the subsequent development of the Workers League, which Wohlforth founded. He asserts it turned away from the fight to save the SWP for Trotskyism as soon as it was expelled, and represented the opposite to Robertson, who was a sectarian nationalist. This is both a misjudgement of Robertson, who had not degenerated to that extent in 1963 and an apology for Healy, who he says was responsible for supplying Wohlforth with his disastrous tactical orientation, which led to the abandonment of his theoretical struggle in favour of the IC’s ‘Marxism’ which ignored reality. Wohlforth abandoned all independent theoretical work and became a mini-Healy with all the Healyite appalling bureaucratic practices.

He quotes the analysis made by Ramos on Lambert and Healy of how they wrote off organisations because of centrist betrayals but then gives as an example how Healy falsely described the entry of the LSSP into the coalition government in Sri Lanka in 1964 as “the greatest betrayal in the history of Trotskyism”. Well if it was not it certainly was among the contenders for that title.

He refers to the SLL’s ‘fight for Trotskyist principles’ before 1964. I can only refer him to Bob Pitt’s series, ‘The Rise and Fall of Gerry Healy’ in Workers News, paper of the WIL to debunk this myth. Also he defends Healy behaviour at the Third Congress of the IC in 1966 and the bureaucratic way discussion was aborted by the expulsion of Robertson. It does not matter if Robertson actually wanted to go, this was still appallingly bureaucratic.

The circulation of the article was clearly intended to demonstrate that the FI (rebuilt) had a very similar method to the WRP. In fitting history to a preconceived idea they clearly had the same method, but Varga’s Stalinophobia made him a more suitable partner for Slaughter.

The WRP and Varga were delighted at the misfortunes of the FI (rebuilt) and put this forward as proof that they had been correctly excluded from the PreC. However the conduct of the WRP itself was, at least in part, responsible for the degeneration. Also the Ramos leadership did act with a principled defence of Trotskyist principles, as they saw them, once the split was forced on them. However it must be said that they were very late in tackling the French problem, thereby making it much worse. It had been clear for some time that this section was drifting rightward. Assouline’s brother had played a very opportunist role in the Paris students’ strikes earlier in 1987.
**The LTT**

The Leninist Trotskyist Tendency, whose main leader is Jean-Pierre Goethuys and is based in Belgium and Germany, did succeed in getting elected to the PreC. This happened more by accident than design. The WRP did not know who they were and when they turned up late did not bother to check up on them. They were allowed in as posing little threat.

The excuse of the LTT was that they wished to fight within the PreC to break the ‘Fourth Internationalists’ from the PreC. Perhaps so but joining such an organisation after the arbitrary exclusion of those who wished to fight for Trotskyist principles spoke ill of the political methods employed by this organisation. They acted as a left cover, though they did have some effect on the ‘Fourth Internationalists’.

The expulsion of Gerry Healy created great excitement in Greece. The IC had a long history there (of which the WRP members only knew the distorted and potted version contained in the volumes of ‘Trotskyism Vs Revisionism’) (1). Contact was made with L Sklavos, of the KDE, soon after the split and his “Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire” article caused some problems. Sklavos or the ‘renegade Sklavos’ as he was always called in the WRP, was the third member of the triumvirate that allegedly stabbed the IC in the back in 1974: Thornett, Wohlforth and the renegade Sklavos’.

The ‘Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire’ document exposes the completely fraudulent nature of the Morenoite claims to some type of orthodox Trotskyism. It analyses their collaboration with the Argentinian CP, their support for the Pablo line on Cuba, their stand for the democratic rights of all parties “even to the point of the counter-revolutionary and fascist”. This was a LIT attack Mandel from the right on the issue of ‘democracy’.

Healy had imposed a split on the Greek section of the IC in 1974 because Sklavos questioned the ideas being pushed by the WRP that Arafat was heading towards the notion of Permanent Revolution, the ‘subjective pseudo philosophy of Healy and Tom White’ (Healy’s stooge in the Cowley car factory in Oxford) participation in the committee of co-management in Leyland (cf. Norah Wilde, letter to Workers Press, 28 November 1987)

**C Slaughter and WRP “Discussions” In Greece**

This group has positions of extreme homophobia (they were expelled from the Thornett group’s International, the TILC, for the production of what can only be described as a rabidly homophobic document). The group has other right wing positions like supporting the mujahedin in Afghanistan and is in general quite Stalinophobic. Vangelis, who joined the North London branch and is from Greece, gave this account, in February 1988, of Slaughter’s dealings with the Greek KDE after the split.

The expulsion of Healy in 1985 was not merely a British but an international event. When
a photocopy of the News Line which announced this event reached ICL (Communist Internationalist League), it was immediately published in their paper Ergatilki Drasi and circulated to other organisations informing them of the split. A letter was sent to the WRP CC asking why Healy was expelled and what the policies of the new WRP would be. No reply was ever forthcoming...

A visit by a comrade of the KDE in the winter of 85/86 to London led to a meeting with leading members of the WRP, notably Cde Slaughter. An account was given of the split and of the political differences underlying it. Agreement was reached to send copies of the News Line/Workers Press to Greece and that a discussion ‘with all the groups that broke from Healy in the early 70s would proceed...

In the meantime for almost two months the Greek Healyite group EEK (renamed as such after a transformation congress where it became a party overnight!) did not mention publicly that Healy had been expelled. For this reason a publicity campaign ‘was launched by comrades of the KDE, they flyposted the offices and bookshops of EEK ‘with copies of the News line headlined: C. HEALY EXPELLED’ and on various demonstrations shouted at them Where is Healy?’ The realignment of forces in which the ex-IC Greek and Spanish sections joined ‘with Healy was subsequently announced and issue after issue of Socialiski Allagi (paper of EEK) avoided the question of why Healy was expelled, and simply explained the split as a plot among conspirators, notably Banda/Slaughter. Despite the agreement to mail copies of Workers Press to Greece, these generally arrived months late or never at all. Banda’s “27 Reasons”, was received together with Bill Hunter’s reply, were discussed and a reply was drawn up by L Sklavos which was published in May ‘86 in Workers Press. Following this article C Slaughter wrote in the letters page that the discussions with the KDE would continue and that what L Sklavos said in relation to Greece was correct...

In the following months although the WRP was sent and it translated documents of the political positions of the KDE it made no official reply. However in August ‘86, C Slaughter made a visit (the first in ten years) to this group and informed them that the WRP was a new organisation, and would listen to all groups, especially those who had broken ‘with Healy at an earlier stage. The formation of an international discussion bulletin on the problems of the 4th International was stressed as being the central international task of the WRP. As a result of these new developments, Cde Slaughter emphasised that the assessment made by the KDE of the LIT should be translated and sent to the WRP for publication. What was also stressed by ode Slaughter was that a group of comrades Inside EEK were sympathetic to his views, and a discussion proceeded as to how best could the struggle develop to split the Healyites. C Slaughter volunteered to bring into contact those members of the EEK who were in opposition to Savas (Secretary of organisation) with the members of KDE. An appointment was made. No one turned up. The “discussions” continued

Many months elapsed in which the WRP made no contact with the KDE except to mail it copies of Workers Press. The Ten Points, having been translated and published in Ergatiki
Drasi, the article requested by Cde Slaughter in summer 1986 Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire was sent to the WRP for publication. This occasioned many letters and many long distance phone calls, but not the straight answer that was called for. On the contrary the article was suppressed. A notice in a WRP internal bulletin (No. 24) stated it would be published in a forthcoming number of the bulletin. It never was

At the 11-12 April Preparatory Committee in London a letter was submitted by hand, explaining that KDE was in general agreement with the Ten Points but due to lack of financial resources was not able to send a delegate. Once more no formal reply was received from the Preparatory Committee or the WRP). And yet the discussions continued

**In the Image of the Past**

In the early 70s, the WRP after having transformed itself into ‘The party’ overnight, avoided any and all discussions which might sow scepticism about the infallibility of its founder-leader’, Healy. A series of splits occurred in the British, American and Greek sections of the IC. The WRP’s opportunism-cum-sectarianism in the British workers movement (refusal to fight ‘left’ reformist leaders, coupled with the condemnation of everyone else being agents of the bourgeoisie) and the fact that Healy found in the PLO the embodiment of Trotskyism, naturally led to serious differences on the part of a whole number of comrades, internationally. After having previously split with the OCI, Healy chose the same path in relation to Thornett, Wohlforth and Sklavos. Anyone daring to question Healy’s assumed status as Pope of Trotskyism could dearly not be part of the Win) or the IC. Using typically Stalinist methods of intimidation, arbitrary expulsion, censorship and smear campaigns, Healy contrived to avoid any reason discussion of differences in which he rightly feared he would be trust back on the defensive. Commanding the blind loyalty of a considerable apparatus enabled Healy to deal with political criticisms in the only was he knew how - organisationally but his political future based on such methods proved to have a limited span.

The split with Healy aroused great expectations. Many believed the WRP and especially its leading comrades for decades would break with the bureaucratic methods of the past. Obviously nowadays it is much harder to expel comrades because of differences, as the overlord (Healy) has gone. But what remains possible is what happened in relation to Greece and the way in which the matter has been conducted by Cde Slaughter in the image of the past. Why was the LIT flavoured above all other organisations, especially those which were once part of the International Committee? Why weren’t the criticisms of the KDE published in the Win) as agreed by Cde Slaughter? And why, above all, have the intrigues of Cde Slaughter been kept secret from the membership of the WRP?

Those who avoid reasoned political differences in flavour of unprincipled blocs (with the LIT in particular), like Healy have something to hide. And their self-centred nonsense about being the “continuators of Trotskyism”, its sole successors, its “orthodox”
representatives is part of the legacy of Healy. A legacy we claim to have broken from”. The Preparatory Committee were developing relations with the ‘Socialist Study’ group, who had been connected to the LIT and the group who split from the Healyite group led by Savas Michael and had no interest in politically clarifying anything.

**Harry Turner Does a Volte-face**

Under pressure from the others US Trotskyist groups. Harry Turner, the leader of the US Morenoite group, the ISL, protested to the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the LIT on behalf of the ISL CC, in a letter on 18 April:

“Leon Perez has announced that the projected international Trotskyist conference is to be a fusion conference of the IWL (FI) [LIT] and the Workers Revolutionary party, and that only those organisations which intend to be part of the fusion will be allowed to participate.

We also believe that the attempts by Leon Perez to prevent the necessary process of political discussion with organisations with which we have fundamental agreement on a Trotskyist program and perspectives by transforming the international conference into a fusion conference of the IWL (FI) and the WRP, will achieve few if any lasting positive results for either the IWL (FI) or the WRP”.

And he proposed, among other things:

“That Leon Perez be replaced as the representative of the IWL (FI) by another member of the IEC who has earned the respect of the international leadership for his/her integrity and judgement.

However, when the IEC of the LIT met on 3-S May 1987 Harry Turner was whistling a different tune. He wrote a letter backing down on all that anger:

‘I certainly did not mean to infer that the WRP was accepting orders from comrade Perez, or that he was giving orders to its members. My meaning, which was not, unfortunately, reflected in the letter (l), was that comrade Perez, as the official representative of the IWL” was in a position to make recommendations to which the representatives of the WRP would give consideration and which could dearly influence their decisions...etc.”

The WRP leaders, Pirani and Hunter were in Argentina at the time for the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee. They were furious at the exposure of their skulduggery. Perez was on his way out at this stage anyway. He was replaced when it became obvious that he was lying about the situation within the WRP.

Before Perez departed the offices of the WRP he produced a surprisingly leftist ‘Draft Resolution on Central America’ while many criticism could made of this document, it is a verbal return to the best period of the Moreno ‘left turn’. Its significance was only revealed later when he participated in a split in the MAS the following year it was a split to the left, led by students and trade unionists repelled by the support of the MAS for a
bourgeois candidate in the Argentine Presidential elections and by the grosser aspects of the opportunism and the sectarianism it used to hide this.

However, in the statement they made in the immediate aftermath of the split they dated all the problems of the party to the errors of leadership after the death on Moreno and seemed to avoid the necessity for a political reassessment of the history of Morenoism itself and of the Fourth International.

The split off, the Partido de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (PTS), formed an international tendency within the LIT and Perez, the political chameleon, ruled over his fiefdom in the US and Mexico in political sympathy with them for some 6 months before they saw through him. His US group, the IWL, had another split in 1988, with Perez, based in San Francisco, expelling the majority of the group, who were based in Los Angles.

Harry Turner’s group became the official LIT group in the US after this, which consideration may have influenced the manner of the retraction of his criticisms of Perez, which also condemned by implication, the manoeuvres of the LIT and the WRP.

### The Irish Workers League Breaks with the Preparatory Committee

On 2 July, the Irish Workers League severed connections with the Preparatory Committee:

‘We consider the operation of the EXCLUSIVITY of the Ten Paints as a mistake which has reduced the whole procedure to what amounts to a Political Fraud. It is not our desire to be part of it any longer and as we feel that a continuity of the Preparatory Committee in its present form and within its present political parameters serves as an OBSTACLE to sincere discussion and to democratic organisation of reorganisation and regroupment of the Fourth International’.

On 11 January 1988 Pirani eventually produced a ‘Report on International Work’, ten months after the event, full of half truths and evasions, covering up the skulduggery in the formation of the Preparatory Committee and the arbitrary fashion in which groups from all over the world were excluded, having been invited to attend.

Chris Bailey’s reply, ‘Lies and Distortions’, reveals the truth as against the worst of the lies. He shows that the reasons given by Pirani for exclusion of these organisations were wrong:

### GOR

Pirani says that it was decided to refer them to the PreC because the basis of its participation was still wider discussion internally’ (i.e. inside the GOR)

Not true. The GOR was not allowed onto the PreC, because it was said to have “slandered the LIT by alleging they had a secret deal with the Maoist guerrillas in Peru. Pirani himself conveyed this information to them. The allegation was a complete lie emanating from Leon Perez and he later had to withdraw it.
**Socialist Viewpoint (Thornett)**

Pirani says John L’s letter did not indicate agreement with the call. This is not surprising since it was not an application to join the IEC. Thornett himself had brought an application the night before the meeting indicating agreement with the call.

**International Trotskyist Committee**

Pirani claims that no delegate from this and that their application was made “before the WRP resolution clarifying the basis of participation on the PreC had been passed”.

Nonsense. There were two delegates from the ITC present, Franco Grisolia from Italy and Tony Gard from Britain. Franco had missed an important conference in Italy to be present. They were completely familiar with the “basis of participation since Tony Gard had, at the invitation of the WRP, been present at the WRP conference (on 5 April GD). They had accepted the new conditions.

**International Secretariat of the FI (rebuilt)**

Pirani says “when the WRP’s resolution was passed to them the comrades had asked for observer status on the PreC.” He also says that their conception of a conference was opposed to the WRP’s “divide and unify on the basis of principle.”

The delegate from the ISFI had rung from Detroit the week before the conference. She [Margaret Guttshall GD) had all the conditions read out to her. After consultation with her Paris leadership she had agreed to them. She then explained she could not afford to fly from Detroit if more conditions were being made that would exclude her. She was assured that this would not happen. When she arrived she was taken, jet lagged, off the plane and interrogated by Leon Perez who decided she couldn’t be admitted to the PreC.

It was under these circumstances she decided to apply for observer status. One of the differences voiced in the recent split in this organisation was that the Assouline group denounced the ‘open’ conference policy as being one of divide and unify. They instead called for a “unification” conference. This split would make no sense if Pirani is right. (Despite Bailey’s protestations it is clear that at this point, ‘divide and unify on principle was not the policy of the FI (rebuilt), in practice. or of the PreC either for that matter GD)

**Workers Socialist League - USA**

Pirani says they “clearly - from their publications and from discussions with their representative - did not regard the LIT comrades as part of the continuity of Trotskyism: their application was rejected on that basis.”

Not true. They agreed to recognise the LIT as part of the continuity of Trotskyism. They were excluded because of an earlier letter from Steve Bryant had referred to “the known violence of the “IWP” (one of the US LIT sections led by Perez GD]. Since Steve Bryant had himself been physically attacked by Leon Perez, at a public meeting in a well
documented incident for no reason at all (it was a case of mistaken identity), it is hardly surprising that he should refuse to renounce this statement.

All of the above organisations, excluded on the most spurious grounds, which now have to be lied about, come from the IC tradition. By excluding them the WRP’s leadership have cut the membership off from a serious international discussion on and assessment of the IC. Yet we are told further on in Pirani’s document (page 10), that the members of non-Trotskyist organisations are now being admitted onto the PreC.

WRP members must reject Pirani’s fraudulent document. They should demand that an apology be given to the excluded organisations. The so called ‘Preparatory Committee’ must be disbanded and a new one formed which seriously sets out to tackle the problems of the Fourth International”.

**Footnote:**

(1) The seven volumes of ‘Trotskyism Vs Revisionism’ were compiled by Slaughter from an organisationally sectarian position that omitted many relevant documents, in order to present the Healyite IC as the continuator of Trotskyism. This is in contrast to the US SWP who published every document of the political struggles in the Trotskyist movement.

Soon after the split with Healy, Pirani began proclaiming that the excluded documents had to be published at once. But when Ken Moxham, a professional historian, began to publish documents from the party archives, to which he had been given access, which ran counter to the plans of fusion with the LIT, the skeletons were quickly put back in the cupboard and Moxham, and all other political opponents, were denied all further access to the archives.

Moxham proved Healy was totally Anglo-centric, had no interest in Latin America and did not even bother to answer letters from his comrades in Chile who complained that Moreno had abandoned Trotskyism and liquidated into Peronism (K Moxham; History Vs ‘Trotskyism Vs Revisionism’ In No 26). It is a scandal that such valuable historical records are as closed to Trotskyist historians as are the records of the KGB. ‘Glasnost’, WRP style has come to an end and it is again necessary to defend historical falsifications.
Chapter 12: No Question of Principle

“However that impact will be a thousand times Intensified if the forces of the Fourth International are able to foster the development of a ‘Trotskyist party which plays a significant role’ (in the coming South African revolution GD).

The view of Bronwen Handyside (editor Workers Press 1989-1990) on the world historical role of Trotskyism, Or how WRP leaders showed their contempt for Trotskyism.

In the aftermath of the April Congress and the first meeting of the PreC events seemed to be developing rapidly for the LIT/WRP fusion. On 22 April Pirani sent a letter to the MAS under the name of the CC, congratulating them for their refusal to endorse Alfonsin’s compromise with the military and pledging to stand in ‘international revolutionary solidarity.’ Of course the basis for not signing was not examined. Workers Press was filled with the most disgusting sycophantic articles in praise of the LIT and its sections.

I was expecting to be charged with expulsion at that first CC meeting after the Congress, on 26 April. This proved impossible because differences began to emerge here and the monolith began to crack. This long CC (8 or 9 hours) spent 4 hours discussing Dot Gibson’s complaint against Chris McBride that he had absented himself from the CC to attend a City AA function against his branch decision by getting Bob Archer’s permission. Wayne Poulsen then raised a great hullabaloo on the proposed voting structure for the PreC. The WRP had got 4 delegates, the LIT 3, the IWl 2, the Italian RSL, who was about to rejoin the LIT, got 2, the GOCQI got 2, the LTT got 1 and the Communist Workers League of Turkey got 1.

Poulsen got a resolution passed, with one vote against, that there had to be a 2/3 majority on all resolutions and that no organisation could have more than 50% of the delegates at a meeting. Varga strongly objected to the domination of PreC by the Morenoites. This disagreement opened the cracks. Varga, now freed of his left wing critics, could afford to sound left himself and he began to deepen his criticism of the LIT, cautiously at first.

Hughie Nicol became an overnight supporter of the Irish revolution and got a resolution passed requiring all CC members to visit Belfast. Needless to say, they did not. Slaughter pulled back. He then set about healing this alarming rift in his alliance. At the planning meeting for the Conference of Support Groups (miners, print workers, hospital occupations etc.) Nicol’s position for a July meeting was defeated. So the WRP, led by Hughie Nicol, now proceeded to call its own conference, thereby attempting to split the support groups. Nicol had been compromised and promoted, so he shut up after that.

Pat Brady and John Reese, from the Tower Hamlets print workers support group, were outraged. They began to protest vigorously in letters to Workers Press at this sectarian manoeuvring. Their protests were dismissed. Thus the WRP turned their back on one of
the few gains they had made since the split.

Slaughter, seeing the political differences between Bailey and me, attempted to compromise Bailey by getting the Political Committee meeting of 27 April to send him to ‘visit’ me in the company of the Wayne Poulsen to determine my intentions. I rejected this manoeuvre at the CC on 10 May.

There had been no discussions on my political intentions at the CC meeting on 26 April (due to the differences outlined above) and any discussions on my political intentions should be held in that arena, I asserted. Chris Bailey also asked for permission to call a meeting to establish a faction and this was agreed at the 10 May CC.

The Congress had voted to donate £1 per member to a fund for Medical Aid for Nicaraguan Prisoners and that money had to be borrowed as its collection had not been arranged. It was also reported to this CC that the finance for Workers Press had collapsed and its future was in serious doubt. No one was selling the paper. This was the real motivation behind the attack on McBride. However a bureaucratic imposition of discipline, without a coherent political line, was impossible. Who could be expected to respect the WRP now after all their appalling sectarian/opportunistic manoeuvring? Time to sell some more WRP assets!

**El Generalissimo Pirani**

Pirani became the principal Morenoite in the party after he returned from a five weeks’ visit to Argentina at the end of May. A resolution was produced which Pirani put to the CC in June proposing fusion with the LIT without further ado. It was an appalling document, making half excuses for political positions that were indefensible. It was perhaps Pirani’s greatest political humiliation, having moved from the leadership of the left wing of the party to the leadership of the right wing in six months.

These are some of the arguments in Pirani’s unnamed document, which he put to the CC but which never appeared in the Internal Bulletin. After the resolution to join the LIT, reproduced at the end of this chapter, there is, in section 4, ‘Where we do not have agreement with the IWL-FI (LIT), subsection (a):

“The IWL-FI manifesto refers (section 13) to ‘the need to build a mass revolutionary international, the FI, with sections in every country.’... It also says ‘the fact that Trotskyists will surely be in a minority in this International does not bother us at all.’

How does Pirani square this circle? Simply enough:

‘The discussion is not on a difference of political principle... we are united against the principle of a centrist International (what have you just described then, a reformist International? GD) and against Lambert’s conception of a federated international
without democratic centralism (which must be why the Moreno and Lambert organisations fused in the early 1980s to form the ‘Parity Commission’).

In subsection (b) we get:

“The IWL-FI puts forward a tactic, which can and must be applied at certain times and in certain countries as part of the process of building the FI of building the united revolutionary front; that is ‘the unity of revolutionary fighters and not of those fighting under other banners such as Castroism and Stalinism’: ‘the fusion of our current with organisations and groups which break from the treacherous and reformist leaderships’ such a front must be formed ‘on the basis of a clear revolutionary programme’ without which It runs the risk of becoming a ‘centrist organisation’, at the same time ‘more than ever the great task is the development and strengthening of the Trotskyist organisation’”.

This is a deliberately confusing scenario: we fuse with ‘some revolutionaries’ (presumably centrists) on a ‘clear revolutionary programme’ which is not centrist, nor yet Stalinist or Castroist and certainly not Trotskyist (that would simply mean the LIT had recruited these ‘revolutionaries’) and have thereby strengthened Trotskyism.

Pirani clears up the confusion. The thing works, so there! In Brazil there is the ‘trade union united revolutionary front’, in Mexico the ‘united revolutionary front’ with the Zapatist Workers party and in Columbia the ‘united revolutionary front’ with ‘A Luchar’.

Again there is “NO Question OF Opposition IN PRINCIPLE to the ‘united revolutionary front’.

And in subsection (c) we get:

“The IWL-FI manifesto (section one) states: ‘The enormous upsurge of the masses - willing to kill or be killed in the struggle -in the middle of an economic and social crisis with no end in sight, has triggered a ‘world-wide revolutionary situation.’ It refers to a ‘world-wide revolutionary front’ against imperialism, Opposed to a ‘counter-revolutionary front of imperialism (manifesto, section two) which is aided by a ‘front for “social peace” and “democracy” including ‘the US Democratic party, a wing of the Republican party itself, and certain European Imperialist governments, as well as their junior partners, the bourgeoisies of the backward countries, the bureaucratic governments of the workers states ... the CP, the entire Social Democratic second International, the union bureaucracies, the churches... nearly all the so-called left’ and many guerrilla leaderships, principally the Sandinistas and the leadership of the FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional) in EL Salvador.’”

To that, if I wasn’t an atheist, I could only say ‘Christ Almighty’. It is clearly a ‘Trotskyist’ version of the Stalinist ‘two opposing camps’ popular front theory, another attempt to emulate Pablo where class analysis and the independence of the working class is replaced by ‘camps’ and ‘blocks’. What did Pirani say to it? Well, you see, this too:
"IS A DIFFERENCE NOT OF PRINCIPLE BUT OF Characterisation. Has it caused an ultra-left orientation like Healy’s, in the case of the IWL-FI? The very opposite; (indeed! GD) they have more success in gaining influence over sections of the working class (aha, they will soon be as good as the Labour party! GD), in the course of a prolonged struggle against sectarian ultra-leftism of the USFI (the first admission that the LIT was to the right of the USec on certain questions - the USec was always characterised as a right opportunist grouping by the ICFI. GD), than any other organisation claiming to be Trotskyist”. 

(The upper cases above are added by me. GD)

Pirani also brought back a detailed report on the meeting of the IEC of the IWL where he reported, without blinking an eyelid, that their resolution spoke of “the triumph of the democratic revolution” in the Philippines and a whole heap of rubbish of that ilk.

Four warring ‘factions’ on the CC.

This was too much, even for Cyril Smith. He raised strong objections to the resolution and Pilling, seeing Smith was getting a response, jumped in to support him. But nothing was to prepare us for what happened at the next meeting of the CC. This opened in high drama. Cyril Smith was in tears. He said he had resigned from the WRP the previous night but now retracted that. He would fight on! He sobbed:

“Geoff Pilling, you pulled a dirty centrist trick on me”.

What had happened was, to accommodate Smith’s objections, Pilling had co-authored a resolution with him, basically proposing to hold a series of meeting on the politics of the LIT and, having agreed to the politics, then to fuse with them. Then this ‘dirty centrist trickster’ got rid of Smith on the pretext of sending him to speak at an RCP meeting and called in Perez who inserted a section which said ‘lets declare that we will fuse with the LIT after the discussions’. The positions seemed very close, one saying ‘lets pretend to discuss the politics of the LIT and then join’ the other saying ‘lets cut the crap and declare the outcome of the discussions before they take place’.

Four warring ‘factions’ now emerged on the CC. On the right were Pirani, Hunter, Simmance, Martin Ralph, Frank Fitzmaurice and the honorary CC member Perez, who opined at this meeting that quantity engenders quality. Hunter obviously believed this and proceeded to produce even more bucketfuls of bullshit. This group knew no real discussion of the politics of the LIT was possible so were opposed to it. On the centre right were Dot Gibson, Bob Archer and Pilling who basically agreed with the right but thought they would not get away with it. On the centre left were Cyril Smith, Charlie Pottins, Keith Scotcher, Phil Penn and Mike Howgate. They were responding to the disquiet in the membership over the issues raised by the oppositionists in the WRP and on the Preparatory Committee. They knew they were politically ruined if they prostituted themselves in
the manner demanded by Pirani. The future IF with Richard Goldstein were on the left.

I should say there was a fifth, silent ‘faction’. Slaughter and his trade union bureaucrats were in none of the three factions. In revolutionary terms a political cipher, Slaughter awaited the bounce of the ball, the outcome of the extremely hostile confrontation that was now taking place between the two centre ‘factions’ before he decided what to do.

The Pilling ‘faction’ feared that the actions of Smith would ruin their chance of international glory, the Smith ‘faction’ feared that the actions of Pilling would give the game away. The Hunter/Pirani ‘faction’ longed for International glory also but without the home base of the WRP it was not enough for Pirani and Simmance. The inability of any of them to proceed on the basis of their own professed political beliefs and principles marked them all as inveterate centrists. The only thing that united the IF on the left was their scorn of this type of dissimulation at this point.

Slaughter proposed a resolution, which basically supported Smith and this was carried. The split with the LIT was now inevitable because the discussion on the politics of the LIT was to go ahead. Pirani had lost his bid for the party leadership on the basis of the LIT franchise and so deserted the sinking ship. As ever, Pirani abandoned his supporters as soon as he saw that he was in a minority. Having ratted on the left he was now about to re-rat on the right.

**The South African Revolution**

The next point of conflict was South Africa. The co-operation around the Trade Unions Sanctions Campaign (TUSC) was one of the few remaining areas that brought the WRP into contact with other groups. Bronwen Handyside co-chaired the Campaign with Anne Wackett of Workers Power. A conflict arose on the WRP CC in early June when it was reported that Howard Keylor was to visit Britain within the next few weeks to speak on trade union action against apartheid. Keylor had led a very successful strike and blacking operation against trade with South Africa on the San Francisco docks. However he was also bitterly hated by Leon Perez because he had recruited a section of Perez’s membership to the Bolshevik Tendency (BT), of which he is a member. The BT is a split-off from the Spartacists.

A great difficulty was being made about getting a proper letter from Keylor’s Stalinist-led trade union local (branch) to organise the tour. Keylor made clear that the whole point of this tour was not to speak as a representative of the Stalinist-led local, but to speak as a Trotskyist to trade unionists and militants about the struggles against Stalinist betrayals and all the other obstacles encountered in a fight for solidarity action with the South African Revolution. All the WRP wanted was to impress Ron Todd with him.

The CC decided not to support the tour at this meeting, leaving out the question of the
position of the TUSC. Handyside made it clear at the end of the meeting to Bailey that the TUSC would not assist in the tour without this letter so he requested permission to assist Keylor himself at the next CC a week later as leaflets were already printed and meeting already booked. The CC agreed to this.

It was here that I intervened and committed an offence for which I was charged with expulsion. I suspected that Handyside was lying about the position of the TUSC, and, having failed to contact her I informed Anne Wackett of Keylor’s impending arrival. Wackett, of course, had not been told by Handyside about the Keylor’s proposed arrival a few weeks later but immediately swung into action, called an emergency meeting of the campaign and gave what assistance she could to the tour through the TUSC and Workers Power.

I helped organise a meeting in London with the help of the London Rank and File and the Building Worker group and Chris Bailey organised the most of the tour with the assistance of Cambridge Trades Council and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), of which Moses Mayekiso was the General Secretary. Individual WRP members in the North East, Derby and elsewhere assisted but Handyside and the majority understood the need to wreck the tour and did nothing. I am proud that I still possess the expulsion charge from the WRP, on Handyside’s lying report to the CC. This claimed that I had usurped her function by informing Ann Wackett of Keylor’s visit and by organising meetings for him without her knowledge. She should, of course, have informed Wackett herself. Wackett provided me with a statement of what I had done to refute this.

It was an error not to have insisted on going through with this farcical trail. Bailey and I were charged, in effect, with failing to sabotage Keylor’s tour and failing to put narrow sectarian loyalty to WRP manoeuvres above the South African revolution, as requested by Perez! The majority of the WRP membership, in a return to the supine position on the Iraqi executions, slavishly did the reactionary bidding of Slaughter.

The WRP’s Recent History on South Africa

The whole history of question was very vexed in the WRP. The old WRP had supported the PAC in South Africa not on a principled basis, but of course, as a substitute for a Trotskyist party. The PAC are a left split from the ANC and share with them a bourgeois nationalist programme. To counterpose one to the other was to abandon the Trotskyism Transitional Programme and Permanent Revolution.

South Africa came up immediately after the split with Healy when the Hyland groups objecting violently to the front page of the News Line of 2 November because it did not distinguish between workers sanctions and demands that Thatcher impose sanctions. Then the argument arose about the slogan: ‘Arm the African Workers’. This had been the pre-split WRP slogan and now the Slaughter/Banda WRP wanted to repudiate it. It was
posed in a totally abstract way by the old WRP, not as a transitional demand of any sort, but as a pseudo-revolutionary cry to recruit blacks youth. In fact the News Line group, after the split, went so far as to collect funds at Lambeth Trades Council and else-where for this purpose. I hope that they were able to buy many guns for the workers of Soweto.

Whilst the Hylandites objected strongly to the abandonment of the slogan they had no conception either of who this demand was aimed at and whose treachery it was designed to oppose. Were we to demand that the trade union leaders, the TUC and Neil Kinnock supply guns to the workers of South Africa?

**Arm the Azanian Workers**

However the way Bronwen Handyside and John Simmance rubbed down the entire concept of arming the African workers disturbed many. Norah Wilde provided the answer to this question in May or June 1987. In a document ‘ANC/Soviet Union - Arm the Azanian Workers’, she presents the slogan as a transitional demand on the ANC and the Soviet Union in order to expose the treacherous leadership of the ANC and the SACP. She also maintained that Trotskyists should also be in the forefront of seeking all sources of arms for the SA workers. She attacked those who opposed the slogan:

“Nor should it be held up (the slogan) until revolutionary leadership is rooted in the S African working class. Not a single moment or opportunity should be lost in exposing before the working class the counter-revolutionary policies of the ANC Satalinists, whilst our propaganda should dearly state that all those forces who oppose the demand are lining up with the Stalinists cm this question.”

This document appeared in the same file as one by Handyside rubbing this demand and asserting that:

“Our solidarity work must be orientated to the development of a Trotskyist party in South Africa and it must be orientated through an International Committee. The building of a party in South Africa must be No. 1 on the agenda of the International Conference.”

Which is fair enough (though Wilde made this the centre of her document), except her conception of what Trotskyism was for in the first place was revealed at the start of the piece:

“The significance of the forthcoming South African revolution for world Trotskyism cannot be over-emphasised whether it remains dominated by Stalinism, and tied to bour-geois democratic forms or whether a Trotskyist party is established in the leadership the overthrow of the Apartheid regime will have an enormous impact on working class consciousness throughout the world.

However that impact will be a thousand times intensified if the forces of the Fourth Inter-
national are able to foster the development of a Trotskyist party which plays a significant role."

Well that’s clear enough. There are obviously two stages to this revolution. The development of a Trotskyist party is not the difference between victory and defeat for the democratic revolution. Our turn, and that of the working class, will come when socialism is on the agenda. Labour must wait. That is not a bad approximation of the LIT line. It would just be a good thing for the consciousness of the world working class if we manage to play ‘a significant role’ in the coming objectively developing revolution.

Handyside did reveal that the Trade Union Sanctions Campaign was on the rocks because the other groups, apart from Workers Power, had dropped out and she implied that she wished they would go too. This was all connected with the relationship with the RCG, which the WRP placed above the relationship with all other groups because they were ‘young and lively’ and they upset the Stalinists and the social democrats.

Anti Apartheid AGM

This went as far as forming a block with them at the 1987 Anti Apartheid AGM against all other groups in opposition to the change of the AA constitution to a delegate structure. This was the main struggle at the Conference according to the WRP, not the TUSC, which the WRP and Workers Power were co-sponsoring. The constitution motion was put to restrict the activities of the RCG at the Conferences but it was surely workers democracy that a large organisation had a delegate structure.

If the (real?) Stalinists had influence in the trade unions, other labour movement bodies and AA groups, then that was the fundamental block to revolutionary activities and this was the arena where revolutions were won or lost anyway not by publicity stunts. It was devastating to the RCG because they had no interest or influence in the organised working class at all; they are totally opposed to independent working class action on sanctions against South Africa or on anything else. In reality this showed the fraudulent nature of the WRP/RCG relationship.

Bob Myers, in a contribution in the same file, makes a totally confused estimate of what was going on. This is his perspective:

‘I think trade union work is central but along the road to that campaign all sorts of activities, like the non-stop picket have to be developed. It is not a question, as WRP speakers said at a City Group rally of turning the City Group youth into the trade unions. (Peter Gibson was correct GD). This will cut no ice with them. They see no activities in the unions and will say. You are in the unions, you get them going, we are busy enough’. I think it is a question of the party developing its work in the unions as tenaciously as the CAAG (City AA Group) and trying to untie all those forces in the trade unions and outside, in a
movement that can challenge the rotten leadership of the solidarity movement. Whether we would have agreed with the start of the non-stop picket but the fact is that its existence is now a challenge to the Stalinists.

To say the AA leadership and the City AA are the same because they both call for peoples’ sanctions is to ignore the real forces both sides represent. City Group is a threat to the Stalinists. It does represent a group of young people largely inexperienced and outside the unions who want to support the struggle in South Africa. We have be a part of that movement and try to give a political basis. To go in and bash the ‘Stalinist’ RCG is not the real question as some seem to think.”

At the beginning of this piece Myers admits that:

“The lack of party clarity on many issues and the lack of party discussion on our work, has certainly led to a lot of playing it by ear rather than a condos intervention.”

**A block with the anti-Stalinist Stalinists**

The sectarian turn of the WRP led many members to be duped into the most ridiculous opportunist positions where nothing was clarified. So these Stalinists, who are only ‘Stalinists’ in inverted commas, are fighting Stalinism with Stalinism and the WRP must intervene and give political direction to this inter-Stalinist struggle. And it is fair to form a block with the anti-Stalinist Stalinists who were opposed to workers’ sanctions against those groups who support workers’ sanctions and then proclaim to be mystified when these groups conclude that the WRP could not be serious about workers’ sanctions in the first place.

The TUSC quickly folded after that when they began to take up with Paul Trewhela. Trwhela had been an advocate of the central role of the Irish revolution whilst he lived in Ireland. He was now an advocate of the central role of the South African revolution (he is a South African). A supporter of the City AA, he was opposed to all SA sanctions on the same basis as Thatcher that it would hurt the blacks. He now began to write the documents for the Trade Union Sanctions Campaign. Even the WRP could not sustain a sanctions campaign whose documents were written by an opponent of sanctions!

The lunatic slander by the WRP against the SWP, accusing them of supporting apartheid was the final nail in the coffin of the Campaign. This appeared in a back page article of the Workers Press, where Handyside claimed the SWP were actively supporting Apartheid because they did not support a march organised by the RCG in support of Moses Mayekiso. She did not even bother with the usual qualification ‘objectively’. In fact the SWP was the only national organisation to support the Moses Mayekiso campaign from the start. Despite our struggles on the CC. the motion proposed by Bailey and me (Bruce was not at the CC) to reverse this lunacy got very little support. Bill Hunter was the fore-
most supporter of this slander on the SWP. The sectarian opportunist politics of the old WRP were back.

**Ramaphosa and Mayekiso**

It is interesting to note that the sell out of the South African miners’ strike (August-September 1987) by the Stalinists was almost completely excused by the WRP. Cyril Ramaphosa, the leader of the SANUM, called off the strike totally undemocratically after secret negotiations with the mine owners. Instead on mounting a mobilisation of the miners to bring out all COSATU members and the rest of the working class behind the miners he ordered the miners to return to the homelands so they would not starve. He starved them of victory.

This was at the height of the struggles of the Stalinists to establish their political domination over the revolutionary-syndicalist wing of COSATU, which was led by Mayekiso. It was also a struggle which could have rekindled and reversed the decline in the mass movement of the mid 1980s against the state.

Ramaphosa, by then a Stalinist, had come from the Black Consciousness movement and revolutionary-syndicalism. It was he who now struck the decisive blow against his former revolutionary-syndicalist co-thinkers. They collapsed ideologically, in front of the combined offensive of the Stalinist and the state. Mayekiso joined the Stalinists after he was released from jail. He was acquitted when it was deemed safe to do so and when, as a revolutionary, he was a spent force.

The back page article in Workers Press of 22 August by ‘A South African Revolutionary’ did not understand any of this and reflected the tail ending and workerist approach which now dominated the PreC. It said:

“It is in this contort - the dire absence of revolutionary leadership - that the errors of the NUM leaders must be placed”

In a very ‘understanding’ front page article on 5th September 1987, on the ending of the strike, Cliff Slaughter comments:

Arguments about if and when the South African miners’ strike should have been called off are of great importance (if I remember correctly some members were arguing that Ramaphosa had no choice but to call off the strike GD) as miners will be rightly critical of secret negotiations and refusal of the NUM leadership to come back and consult the rank and file.”

The ‘Statement by South African Revolutionaries’, in the same issue, was far more critical of Ramaphosa and the NUM leadership although they also adopted the line of defence of the NUN leaders so well pioneered by Healy: ‘The (SA) Miners are not defeated
(Ramaphosa/Scargill will yet lead us to victory. GD) and were thus robbed of any political perspective after what proved to be a serious defeat.

**Pirani Resumes the Witch-Hunt**

On 4 July I got a letter from Pirani saying that Charlie Walsh had reported at a London meeting that I had said at a branch meeting that I had a document proving that the PST (Morenoites) had capitulated to the military dictatorship in Argentina in 1976. I was challenged to produce this document at the CC and send Pirani a copy by return of post. Pirani felt the ground moving from under his feet after Smith’s challenge and the four ways split in the CC. He obviously blamed me for the prospect of losing his empire and the witch-hunt was designed to halt the examination of the LIT’s politics, by now quite widespread in the party.

At the CC on 19 July he screamed and roared liked a demented man and the meeting demanded that I prove, then and there, the capitulation. His dreams of striding the world Trotskyist stage and addressing thousands of LIT supporters on great anniversaries were going up in smoke because people would not agree to stop asking questions. Well they would just have to be shut up!

Proof of capitulation there was in plenty, but as Hunter said, I was only relying on what the enemies of the LIT said, why couldn’t I read their own documents! Even on the charge sheet this is the justification given by Dot Gibson:

“You refused to withdraw your statement until such time as you had evidence to back them up. At the meeting you were given the opportunity to substantiate your allegations, and you produced a number of documents all of which were from sources in opposition to the MAS. You replied to a question that you made no attempt to obtain documents of the time from the MAS. (The MAS refused this request later GD) You are therefore charged... 

In other words only the account of the LIT was the truth and this was the only version we should listen to and anyone that contradicted it was a lie. I made my case and was subjected to ferocious demagogy from all sides. It was imperative that no questions arise on the politics of the LIT. I refused to withdraw my allegation against the PST (the 1976 “aims” of the Morenoites) despite this hysterical pressure and was excluded from the CC with only four votes against and Chris Balky and Dave Bruce walked out with me. Some CC members were to expelling me then and there, but as we had given Healy his constitutional rights, it was now difficult to deny them to me.

We produced a statement on our position and charges were drawn up against us. The first attempt at expulsion collapsed after Dave Bruce pointed out a number of constitutional irregularities in the procedure. At the next attempt a complete change had taken
place. As Mercedes, a MAS representative, later confirmed to the IF, the WRP was ordered to cease the expulsion attempts and allow us factional rights. The reason was this was soon to be made clear. As it was now impossible to avoid discussion on the political positions of the LIT Perez set about organising a faction of WRP members who either did not understand or did not care what the politics of the LIT were in order to split. We resumed membership of the CC at the end of September.

Appendix 1

This is the resolution that was put to the CC on 14 June. Following Cyril Smith’s ‘rebellion” it was referred back to the next CC.

Resolution:

This central committee resolves to:

1. Organise an eight week discussion in the branches, from July to September, including area aggregates, if necessary, on the following documents, which are to be published immediately in the internal bulletin: (a) the IWL-FI Manifesto; (b) the IWL-FI founding thesis; (c) the IWL-FI statutes.

2. To ensure the availability to branches of the documents of the IWL-FI advertised in ‘Workers Press’: to encourage discussion of these documents also.

3. To work to build the international Trotskyist conference: to move a resolution there calling on all those in attendance to join the IWL-FI.

4. To submit the following resolution to the party congress in September:

This Congress decides to apply for membership of the IWL-FI.

‘We urge the Irish Workers League, Revolutionary Socialist League (Italy), Group of Opposition and Continuity of the Fourth International, the Communist League (Australia) the Revolutionary Workers League (Belgium) and International Socialists (Germany), and all others that we are in contact and discussions with in the campaign for the international conference of Trotskyists, to do the same.

‘In making this application we note point 1 of the statutes of the IWL-FI statutes, which states, in part: “The IWL-FI has as its fundamental purpose the overcoming of the crisis of leadership of the world workers movement and the construction of the Fourth International with mass influence. Only in this way, by resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership, will the permanent mobilisation of the workers and oppressed of the world against imperialism and the bourgeoisie be able to attain the victory of international socialist revolution and the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. The IWL-FI does not proclaim itself to be the revolutionary leadership of the world proletariat nor does it rep-
resent the overcoming the present crisis of the Fourth International, but at this point it constitutes the only democratic centralist world organisation which fights for these goals.

‘And point 2 of the IWL-FI statutes which states: The IWL-FI bases itself theoretically, programmatically and politically on the concentrated experience of revolutionary Marxism; the Communist Manifesto, the strategical lessons of the October revolution, the first four congresses of the Communist International and the Transitional Programme (founding programme of the FI) (half line of blank space here GD) of its developments (sic) On these basis it has been possible for us to reach a common comprehension of the present situation and tasks in the Theses of the FI(IC), the founding Theses of the IWL-FI and the programmatic documents adopted by its world conference. This continuation of revolutionary Marxism is not a dogma but is enriched with all the progressive social struggles of humanity which are leading to the defeat of imperialism the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the definitive suppression of class systems,‘’

Appendix 2

Simon Pirani’s letter to me dated 4.7.87:

Dear Gerry,

At the London Aggregate 25.6.87, Charlie Walsh stated clearly that you have a document which shows that the Argentine PST capitulated to the military dictatorship in 1976.

The April 4-5 congress overwhelmingly voted to condemn you because you alleged that the PST had capitulated. That’s how seriously the congress viewed the matter - seriously enough to pass an emergency resolution.

For you to go around, after that, saying you have a document which verifies your allegation, but not placing the document before the Central Committee for its information - and indeed before the whole party - is unbelievable chicanery and arrogance.

I challenge you to send me a copy of this document by return of post. I challenge you to submit a resolution on this question to the CC and place the document before the CC.

Unfortunately the party has neither a constitutional requirement nor a tradition which can prevent people from making outrageous and vile allegations without the least attempt to substantiate them (the WRP, like Stalin, never bothered overmuch with the niceties of constitutions. GD) So all I can do is appeal to you that if you have any self-respect you will let us all see this document.

I expect a prompt reply on this matter. Yours Fraternally Simon Pirani Copy to - W. London Branch.
Appendix 3

This is the expulsion charge for supporting the South African revolution. The CC did discuss the tour, the member of the other organisation that I supposedly attempted to organise a meeting with was the co-chair of the TUSC, Ann Wackett, with whom Handyside should have been arranging the tour anyway. Chris Bailey was similarly charged, despite getting specific permission from the CC to assist in organising the tour:

5th August 1987

G. Downing

Dear Comrade, The Central Committee at its meeting on 1st and 2nd August 1987 instructed me to send you the following decision:

“You are charged under Clause 9 (a) of the Constitution with acting in a manner detrimental to the party and the working class’ (the same thing? GD) in that in breach of the decisions of the Central Committee (Clause 8 (a)) on the conduct of the South Africa Trade Union Sanctions Campaign, you acted and organised against the comrade charged with this work. Further, you acted in contravention of clause 2 (b), which states: All members of the party shall work in other working class organisations as requires by decisions of national congress and the Central Committee.

Comrade Bronwen Handyside is the main WRP member of the South Africa Trade Union Sanctions Campaign. She was made responsible by that Campaign Committee for organising a tour by Howard Keylor as suggested by Comrade Bailey when he returned from the United States. At no time did the WRP Central Committee discuss (lie GD) or take responsibility for his tour.

You by-passed your own party comrade in the Campaign, and attempted to organise a meeting without her knowledge through a member of another organisation and you proceeded to take responsibility for this tour completely ignoring Comrade Handyside who was charged with this work.

Yours fraternally,

D. Gibson On behalf of the Central Committee.
Chapter 13: End Game for the LIT and the WRP

“But this ‘philosophy’ Ignored reality, as Pirani and Smith admit above. Rather a serious ‘error’, one would have thought, which would undoubtedly have consigned us to the camp of revisionism but for the fact that we possessed the Holy Grail of Trotskyist Continuity, which vessel has the power of the confessional in forgiving political sin” GD, On ‘The WRP and the Crisis of the Fourth International’ below.

Or how the WRP reproduced the image of the past in the WIRFI

When Chris Bailey, Dave Bruce and I were allowed back on the CC in September it was on the condition that I produce a reply to the charges against me. When I did this (Centrism, how many Faces, Part 2) it was sent to the MAS for reply who sent straight back saying that they do not answer such documents, this was up to the WRP. As Bill Hunter told us, the LIT position was; ‘we never reply to the dogs that yap at our heels’. It was never answered. The LIT supporters, without Pirani and Simmance now, set about organising their split. Hunter produced reams and reams of the most turgid, unreadable apologies for Morenoism. He accused the IF of anti-internationalism for not wishing to accept one of his three options for us; either join the Lambertists, the Usec or the LIT.

After the struggle around the PreC the stitch-up began to come apart at the seams. The walk-out and split by Hunter and the Bolshevik Faction at the second secession of the Ninth Congress on 21 February 1988 was a staged affair, with the most appalling low level of political argument, which would have been impossible in the WRP a year before. Some good comrades went with the Hunter faction. They despised the Gibson bureaucracy and were, after all, only carrying through the resolutions and motions of Slaughter and the majority of the WRP up to mid 1987. Also as Hunter had gone through the Labour party work in the fifties, at least the group has an orientation to the working class. But it must be said that this is a confused, right wing orientation. The LIT themselves split from the Preparatory Committee soon after the second session of the Ninth Congress, in February 1988.

New alliances were now coming into being among the WRP leadership. Pirani sought to re-establish his left credentials by putting his name and some addendums and amendments, to a document which Cyril Smith wrote called, The WRP and the Crisis of the Fourth International. Slaughter supported though he did not add his name. Here at last was the document with the WRP’s historical assessment of the crisis of the Fourth International. It was far worse than Pirani’s international resolution to the 3rd session of the 5th conference in June 1986.

Striking

The most striking thing about it was that it managed to omit some of the most important episodes in the IC’s history. There is no mention of the formation of the US Workers League and the internal struggle against Cannon and Hansen within the SWP in the early 1960s. There is no mention of the split with the French OCI in 1971 (Varga was a prime
motivator of that split from the ‘wrong’ side). There is no mention of the split with Wolforth in the US or Sklavos in Greece, in 1974. But the most incredible omission is Thornett and the 1974 split, which set the party on its road of terminal degeneration. This cannot be accidental, as the formations of the All Trades Union Alliance is mentioned and anyway the split of 1974 was one of the biggest political questions in the WRP for a whole period after the 1985 split.

Apart from the omissions, what is included is dishonest, distorted and quite simply apologetics for the IC tradition. Clearly Pirani and Smith had now abandoned the LIT and there were only two small sops to it. One was to the ‘SLATO’, the ‘orthodox’ Latin American Trotskyist grouping in which Moreno participated,’ who supported the IC for one year (1953-64) and who had, supposedly done ‘political work, at first hand, on Cuba’. Pirani and Smith neglected to tell us that it certainly was not the Moreno tendency who did the work of value, if any such work was done. The other was a fairly farcical reference to what united the trio; the fact that the WRP split with Healy in 1985, that Moreno split with the USec in 1979 and Varga split with Lambert in 1973 ensured they were the continuity of the Fourth International, it seemed.

The falsifications in the document are legion, we are told that from 1949 onwards Pablo and Mandel “discovered” in the “new reality” of the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions that the Stalinist bureaucracy had, after all, “progressive” sides to it. That Cannon and Healy made exactly the same “discoveries”, at the same time is omitted. And that the PCI majority, who were expelled unanimously from the Fourth International for opposing Pablo in 1951, acted exactly the same as the FI leadership and made no attempt to defend the position of Trotskyism, or the revolutionary reputation of the Trotskyists murdered by Stalinists in these countries or in Vietnam, (see Bleibtreau-Favre ‘Where is Pablo Going? June 1951) does not deserve a mention. It is implied that this was all down to Pablo and Mandel.

**Trotskyism vs. Revisionism**

In the introduction to Trotskyism vs. Revisionism Vol. 1 Cliff Slaughter can only produce two letters from Healy, organisationally criticising Pablo before the ‘Open Letter’. He clearly had to rely on the ‘special relationship’ with the US SWP to make any attempt to answer Pablo on Stalinism. Since Slaughter ‘comprehensively demolishes the claims of all rivals to continuity’ in that foreword, by these slender threads hangs continuity. It is for this reason that David North must politically rehabilitate Cannon before 1953. Of course Varga also has his own claim in but the attempts to make one straight line out of this squiggle cannot be taken seriously.

The answer by Bob Archer to George Lormin’s (aka Torn Kemp) article in WP 3 December 1990; ‘Understanding Germany’ was to accuse him of ‘bad mouthing Cannon’ (a Marxist phrase if ever there was one) reflects this dilemma. Lormin, however, far from proposing to do anything about his historical research, seems to be going Banda’s road. Support for the capitalist reunification of Germany is combined with a questioning of the
nature of the east European states; were or are they really deformed workers’ states at all? He claims David North is also putting forward this question.

Not having seen North’s article in the ‘Bulletin’ I cannot confirm this, but it seems unlikely to me. George Lormin and Bob Archer resumed the debate on Germany in Workers Press 7 and 14 March 1991. Lormin made a far better, more logical, realistic and basically correct assessment of what is really happening in Eastern Europe this time. The statement that the working class have only able to intervene ‘to a limited extent, in some places in most cases they have been used by the restorationists and, where elections have been held they have voted for bourgeois parties, notably in East Germany’ is obviously right as against the Archer/Slaughter/Varga nonsense that the political revolution is being carried out by proxy and that the working class is revolutionary, objectively, so it does not matter who leads them. Archer’s idea that German reunification was a ‘poisoned chalice’ for the German ruling is correctly opposed by Lormin as ‘naive and dangerous’. I would say that it expressed the line of the Workers International, indirect support for the capitalist reunification of Germany.

Orthodox Trotskyists

The WRP and the Crisis of the Fourth International’ then says:

‘The greatest indictment of the “orthodox” Cannon and Healy was that they were unable and unwilling to politically tackle the greatest betrayal of so called “Trotskyists”, the handing over of the 1952 Bolivian revolution to the national bourgeoisie! (This is a Pirani addendum, GD)

But the only vaguely “orthodox Trotskyists” you could possible argue for in 1952 were the expelled PCI but they only fought Pablo with Pabloism. Cannon and Healy were rav- ing Pabloites at the time. In fact Bob Pitt, in his series in Workers News, ‘The Rise and Fall of Gerry Healy’ proves that they were the original ‘Pabloites’, demonstrating again the bogus nature of this term ‘Pabloism’ was Cannon’s creation and Lora was following the line of the entire FI leadership and so they all were politically unable to criticise him.

The Wohlforth, Healy and Greek criticisms of Lora in 1971 are then seen in their true light; factional manoeuvres without principle against the OCI, whatever the truth of their charges. Moreno also criticised Lora from the same stand-point.

Immediately after this we are told of the ‘most shocking example...of how ‘orthodox Marxists’ could betray’ when the LSSP of Sri Lanka supported a bourgeois government in 1964. Again this is a distortion. In what sense, even formally, could the LSSP be called ‘orthodox’? As Pirani and Smith point out ‘orthodox Marxism’ is a contradiction in terms. The LSSP had a long history of revisionism in Ceylon before the betrayal of 1964. The entire ISFI before 1953 split, including Cannon, Healy, Lambert, Pablo and Mandel, could not fight it in any way as it was their own policy.

Apart from the Bolivians they were the only Trotskyist parties with mass following with several MPs, 10% of the vote in election, a mass base in the disenfranchised Tamil tea
pickers and control of the huge General Mercantile Union. So the LSSP could sell out the revolutionary upheavals without protest from the ISFI or from the ICFI after 1953. In fact there was total silence on the failure of the LSSP to intervene in the Great Hartal general strike of 1953 and the vote to join a coalition Government in 1960. They were only able to carry out that decision in 1964. See centre pages Workers News nos 17, 18 and 27 and, also in 27, Al Richardson’s ‘Fourth International? What Fourth International? for these details. Both the ISFI/USec and the ICFI were hoping, opportunistically, to recruit them to their own international, as they had on Bolivia in 1953.

The method of Cannon’s ‘Open Letter’ of 1953 is not condemned. Cannon unilaterally declared a split from the ISFI immediately before the Fourth World Congress, without consultation with other groups or discussions to overcome the revisionism of the ‘Pabloites’. Of course this was just the method of the PreC, where it was realised that you could not fight the revisionism of other groups in an open and democratic arena without being confronted with your own revisionism.

Smith and Pirani have another go at Cuba and end up in the same muddle, being now totally debarred from politically and theoretically criticising Cliff Slaughter:

‘increasingly the SLL ignored anything that did not fit in with its preconceptions...The revisionists saw period of expansion made possible by Stalinist treachery, as a permanent feature of ‘neo-capitalism. We fought them and maintained that the period of capitalist expansionism would burst into the open. But, at the same time, we increasingly cut ourselves off from these movements.

Pirani and Smith had earlier DEFENDED the philosophy behind this: ‘We went much further (than defending Permanent Revolution GD) however, developing an attack on the empiricism which united Hansen and the Pabloites.”

But this ‘philosophy’ ignored reality, as Pirani and Smith admit above. Rather a serious ‘error’, one would have thought, which would undoubtedly have consigned us to the camp of revisionism but for the fact that we possessed the Holy Grail of Trotskyist Continuity, which vessel has the power of the confessional in forgiving political sin. The rest of the document is just a long list of, ‘on the one hand we betrayed Trotskyism, on the other we defended it against Pabloism’, which would define the organisation as Trotskyist Centrist one right up until, I believe, the split with Thornett, when it broke from all attempts to operate the Transitional Programme. Pirani seems to infer that the formation of the WRP’s front All Trade Union Alliance (ATUA) was a decisive turning point in the degeneration, but does not mention the split, as pointed out above.

Healyite Braggadocio

Cliff Slaughter and Keith Scotcher co-authored a document on ‘Work of the WRP in Britain’. From the document it is clear that nothing whatsoever had been learned since: the split in this area. Scotcher had begun to display a tendency to think independently with a document on the present state of the WRP and Cuba. Slaughter intended to use this document to put a stop to all that. You can hear Healy laughing from the grave in these words:
“Capitalism needs now to destroy all reforms, all past conquests (including the nationalised property in the degenerated and deformed workers states), all semblance of the independent organisation of the working class”. etc.

In other words, fascism is upon us, stop asking awkward questions and unite around the banner! The rest of the document is the old Healyite braggadocio without a single transitional demand or detailed programmatic orientation. Indeed how could such exalted Marxists be expected to tell us exactly what we should be doing on the Poll Tax or anything else for that matter? Both the above documents were adopted at the second session of the Congress.

Finally I got the Internationalist Faction to agree to put their name to the last document I wrote on the Morenoites: ‘Defenders of Trotskyist Continuity?’ The Politics of the LIT today: Popular Frontism’. It examined more of Moreno’s positions. Pilling had gone to Argentina after the ICP paper had exposed an article written in their press. The IF wrote:

“When the ‘heroic democratic revolution’ article (their characterisation of WW2) was exposed in International Worker, G Pilling departed in great haste for Argentina, to return with soothing platitudes, ‘it was a mistake, it slipped past the editor, inexperienced author, nothing to worry about’ Now Pilling can hardly be unaware that N Moreno wrote extensively on this subject. We have in our possession two long articles or his from Working Class Opposition (the paper of the US Morenoite group, the IWP) of 5 December 1986… WRP leaders must have read and decided to support this: ‘On the other hand, although our main enemy is imperialism, during WW2 it was fair (II!) to make a military alliance with the US and England against Hitler.”

Difficult to get further from Trotskyism than that!

The split with the Internationalist Faction

The Cambridge resolution presented at the Special Congress in April 1987 was in the same ‘democratic’ vein as the rest of the opposition to the clamp-down at that stage. It also contained much of the revolutionary sounding objectivism that substituted for a programme in the old WRP. Despite Bailey’s determination to eliminate this the document spoke of:

“The miners’ strike which had played a big role in our crisis coming to a head was an expression and herald of great mass struggles internationally which will demand international revolutionary leadership”.

This made big concessions to the perspective behind ‘The miners were not defeated’ and suggested perhaps we did not have to make any tactical orientation to the working class. However in the section ‘Which way Forward?’ point (1) he says

“It is important that every effort is made to include in the process the most advanced layers of the United Secretariat (Usec) itself. This is indispensable both to help us understand the highly complex Usec tradition, which is not simply ‘revisionist’, and; as a step to-
wards the dissolution of the USec itself and the reintegration of its best forces in rebuilt Fourth International”.

This was indeed a necessity, but the WRP were not interested. Point (5] is the only one that recognises any danger to rebuilding project:

“The raising of and the attempt to objectively answer all salient questions on the history of the Trotskyist movement must be actively encouraged. This, as opposed to attempts to gloss over the past for considerations of sectarian self-interest or present diplomatic relations can only serve to enrich our store of knowledge and help us lay a firm theoretical and principled basis for rebuilding the Fourth International.”

There was no attempt to politically characterise the Moreno or the Vargaites, however. There was an unstated assumption that political differences would be solved by the process of getting together without the necessity of defining ourselves politically or fighting for perspectives, thereby confronting the wrong positions of other groups, and our own too. Indeed this was initial assumption of the Workers Press group, which Bailey now defending, without questioning it. Despite these criticisms it seemed to me to be vastly superior to the CC’s Draft Resolution.

The IF was very late in forming, considering the amount and length of opposition to the leadership of its members. The Faction was so late in forming because there was not enough political agreement to launch it. It eventually had to be formed as a mutual defence pact.

‘Down with the fraud on the Preparatory Committee’

The South East London branch led by Doug McEwan and Tony Godfrey moved into opposition to Slaughter and passed a resolution demanding the retraction of the ‘Stalinism is the most counter revolutionary force on the planet’ position on 5 May. This is reproduced at the end of this chapter. At the meeting at which we were excluded from the CC in 19th July we produced ‘Down with the Fraud of the Preparatory Committee’ as founding document. It raised many correct questions but gave few answers. It was not a political platform and therefore cc not be used as a rallying point for the Faction. Again we were waiting for someone else to do this for us. On reflection it must have been really a plea to the WRP intellectuals to adopt honest approach to rebuilding the FI and to perform these tasks for the IF.

It outlined what we saw as the Living Problems of Marxism:

1) The theory and practice of Stalinism since the Second World War. On the one hand there is its role In the property upturns in Eastern Europe and Cuba, and its leadership in the national liberation movements in imperialist dominated countries (China, Vietnam, etc.) which brought about serious defeats for imperialist powers: on the other hand its deeply counter-revolutionary role whenever the working class taked the revolutionary road (Europe after WW2, Indonesia, Chile. South Africa, etc.)
2) What is New in the Global Dynamics of Capitalism? Some examples are the rise of transnational companies; the place of world financial institutions such as the world bank and the IMF; the role of speculation in commodities (including money itself): the crisis of the nation state and its political reflection in the workers movement, social democratic reformism.

3) The Oppression of Women. Theoretical work on the continuing double oppression of women. within class society and in the reactionary nuclear family must be carried forward.

4) The Oppression of Gays and Lesbians. New advances must be made in the special oppression of gays and lesbian.

5) National Liberation and Racism. The position of Marxism on the national question and National liberation must be developed.

6) The Qualitative Development of the Means of Production. Developments in the new information processing technologies, for example, are enhancing the synthesis of powerful new technologies for the productive forces.

7) The Crisis of the Ecosphere. This results from, and places fundamental constraints on, the anarchic growth in levels of production demanded by capitalist dynamics. It can only be solved in the sphere of the social relations of production not by appealing merely to common sense, good will and appropriate technology. It is, however ironic that environmentalists are more global and scientific in their approach to this problem (‘think globally, act locally’ is their motto) than professed Marxists. The political revolution against Stalinism must also confront this problem (Chernobyl).

8) The Development of the Transitional Programme. One of the weaknesses of the Fourth International has been a tendency to iconize the Transitional Programme. Instead of paying lip service to it we must creatively apply it as well as re-elaborate and update it to take account of all the social and political changes since 1938.

The document stated as its main demand: ‘Stop the retreat from the World Conference to unprincipled fusion’ after outlining the Living problems of Marxist theory’ and declaring for a balance sheet of the ‘IC tradition’. These were the demands:

(1) principled relationship with the LIT, as with all other Trotskyist forces

(2) the disbanding of the present sham Preparatory Committee which by the way it was set up can be preparatory to nothing at all but a direct WRP-LIT fusion.

(3) that all correspondence to the WRP and all unpublished letters to the Workers Press must. be made available to the WRP membership.

(4) the preparation of a real world conference of Trotskyists by, as a first step, recalling all tendencies and organisations who responded to our call and submitting to them our original ten points for consideration, critique and amendment. In this way, by practically
demonstrating our commitment to the necessary open discussion within the Trotskyist movement, we must fight to elaborate a new, principled basis for such a conference’

It was signed by 12 party members. We only increased our membership by two after that, despite the growing disillusionment of the rank and file of the WRP. The reason was, again, the criticisms were negative, democratic ones. We never answered enough of our own questions. However we eventually agreed to a political characterisation of the LIT for the February 1988 Congress. It was the document ‘The Politics of the LIT today: Popular Frontism’.

A Negative Opposition

Despite the widespread opposition at both sessions of the Ninth Congress, in November 1987 and February 1988, from North London, Crawley and Leicester we made no gains. We were seen as a purely negative opposition grouping and, in fact, given the impossibility of any of us selling the Workers Press due to political opposition to its line we were only discrediting ourselves in the eyes of any sincere members that were left.

The IF was the only faction in the history of the WRP/SLL after the Thornett group which fought a principled battle against the opportunist manoeuvres of the leadership. At least we succeeded in destroying the unprincipled fusion between the LIT and the WRP and thus laying a basis for future development. By January 1988 Slaughter was using all my arguments against the LIT as his own in the battle against Hunter. This he explained away by saying that my criticisms were mere slanders, and thereby implying that his criticisms were serious Marxist analysts even though many of the points were identical. This was a new milestone in the search for orthodoxy: ‘It is not what is said but who says it that determines the legitimacy of the politics’.

Slaughter had written in his ‘Summary of South American Trip’ in June 1986:

“I have not made any secret of my view that we everything to encourage discussion on possibility of a principled re-unification with this tendency (the LIT). They have Trotsky-ist cadre. They have a record of struggle and have struggled to evaluate their own history (where? when? GD)

Despite the correctness of all the opposition-positions we had taken and the IMPLIED political content of these, the lack of positive political positions doomed us to leave with no gains.

Another US Open Conference

The political activities of the IF after the split consisted of sending Chris Bailey to the US Conference in April 1988 and to Australia and the attempts to hold an Open European Conference.

The debate in the US as to the nature of the coming proposed international conference, and the future of their own conference, continued during 1987. David Kerr responded to Margaret Guttshall, of the TO on 10 July. The TO wished to have an conference ‘open to
all tendencies that are concerned with or identify with the Fourth international’. or ‘with roots in Trotskyism and the Fourth International’. Kerr pointed out that this would not do at all, that certain positions, like defence of Nicaragua against Imperialist aggression, defence of trade union rights in Poland and opposition to the Democratic party were obvious preconditions for any advance to be made. Then he goes on to say that: ‘Marxists in the US don’t have to agree on a 1920 document or a 1938 document before they link up. They just have to agree on what they are linking up to do’.

Unfortunately for them neither Kerr nor Guttshall were able to avoid these historical questions. The point surely was that the co-operation on joint work made the sectarian obstacles to solving these problems less forbidding and the explosion in the WRP was providing a focus for those forces who wished to identify with Trotskyism.

**MRCI**

Kerr also took up Workers Power’s (MRCI, now LRCI) attitude to the conferences. They basically presented their ‘22 Theses in Defence of Trotskyism’ for discussion at the Conference in April 1988. They then issued a ‘Balance Sheet’ of the project in May, basically dismissing the whole thing as a talking shop and set out to construct their own US section from contacts they had made there. He identified the fundamental sectarianism of the MRCI: It did not wish to confront historical problems of the Fourth International, reflected in the existence of groups claiming adherence to it, now wishing to regroup, but counterposed their own International and building their own movement to this struggle. They saw the confusion as merely an opportunity to recruit to a tendency that admitted to no problems of theory or method.

Also other gyrations of the MRCI were condemned. First of all they counterposed an open conference, without precondition, to the WRP’s effort as a one-off. Then they declared that bilateral discussions were much more fruitful, thereby adopting the tactics of the USec, of the Lambdist and Morenoists, who refuse to discuss programmatic questions in order to wall off their rank and file. Kerr declares:

“The MRCI is mistaken. An international open conference of revolutionary Marxists has been desperately needed since 1951 or 1952, when the Pabloites expelled the French majority (they were all Pabloites then, GD). An organised discussion in the US open alike to revolutionists who work in the unions and to syndicalist-minded revolutionists, like the Socialist Labour party, has been needed since 1900. The open conference remains a realistic perspective, as well as the perspective of national conferences. It can lead us in the direction of a Marxist world party firmly based on ‘a Trotskyist programme’. The MRCI took fundamentally the same attitude outlined here to the proposed Open European Conference. On the other hand Kerr’s talk on revolutionary Marxist and syndicalist groups shows a clear tendency to liquidate the specific struggle for Trotskyist regroupment into a much looser forum for discussion and joint work open to the whole far left.

The re-emergence of sectarianism at the time of the Fourth Conference, in 2-3 April 1988 showed the cynical manoeuvring of the WRP, the LIT and the GOCQI had done some
damage to the struggle to regenerate the Fourth International, though many gains were made. Up to ten groups participated in the Conferences at one stage or another. The RWL reported that Chris Bailey, at a public meeting, when in the US opposed comrades who wanted to build Trotskyist party in South Africa or at least he was giving this little emphasis, saying that you had to win the trust of the South African trade unions by consistent work rather than setting out immediately to build a Trotskyist party. The WSL disagreed with the BT and the RWL that Chris Bailey was making a fundamental error in downplaying the need for a Trotskyist party in South Africa. However the WSL condemned the failure of the BT to fight for the Workers Charter rather than the Use Freedom Charter. This was really on the basis that too much politics would alienate ordinary workers. In the BT proposition that Trotskyists should only fight for their programme in their own journals and the consequent compromises with the right wing bureaucracy of the AFL/CIO positions of equating Inkatha trade unions with COSATU was appalling opportunism, the other side of their sectarian workerism. The more moderate workers in of the WSL was also showing it is here, because to counterpose the Workers Charter to the Freedom Charter as some type of adequate political programme for the South African Revolution was to counterpose only a militant revolutionary syndicalism to Stalinism. This was never sufficient to fight the counter-revolutionary politics of the Stalinists. Moses Mayekiso was not the Permanent Revolution as Wayne Poulson had claimed and he proved it by joining the SACP and becoming a Stalinist.

European Open Conference

The call for the European Open Conference was made by the GOR, the ITC, the IF and the Irish Workers League in October 1988. Following meetings at the Lutte Ouvrière Fête in May a conference bulletin was prepared and the Conference took place on 17, 18, 19 March 1989. It was attended by representatives of the ITC, the MRCI, the PreC, the GOR, the IKL (now the RKL) of Austria, the ITC and the IF plus observers from three US groups. The majority of the groups voted against the ITC’s proposals for joint work while inserting in the motion to set up a Liaison Committee formulations implying a level of political agreement which did not exist.

This was a sign of serious differences and difficulties which to begun to emerge. The IWL had already dissolved itself. The GOR had refused to include any criticism of the nature of the WRP’s 10 Points or the way as they saw this as an implied criticism of their refusal to sign the declaration of the excluded groups. The ITC appended a statement setting out their criticism of the Points and method of that original call. The GOR and both Chris Bailey and Dave Bruce now began to interpret this as an implicit criticism of their own failure to fight the political method of the 10 Points and relations with the ITC deteriorated.

Eventually an angry exchange of letters between the GOR and the ITC resulted in the collapse of the plans for a second open conference. In effect the GOR withdrew from the Liaison Committee set up at the first conference. This demonstrated that GOR and the IF
were unwilling to critically examine their own politics and in reality struggled not a po-
itical resolution of problems facing the Fourth International but an organisational one.

**Political Vacuum**

The history of the IF was a repeat, in microcosm of all the errors of the WRP. The same
round of negotiations with other group with no conclusions began. It was again a matter
of pride, as in the WRP of mid 1985, that we took no political line on anything. Our only
public meeting was a great disappointment to me, Dave Bruce taking a very pessimistic
line on the history Trotskyism; “Marxism since the war is a dead science” he declared,
which really destroyed any hope of acting as a pole attraction for other groups. Sue and
Louise from North London specifically cited our political nihilism as the reason they were
joining the LIT rather than us.

A long period of a political vacuum resulted in the emergence of right wing views. Ken
Moxam was the first to express this as he was perhaps the comrade with the least experi-
ence of Trotskyism. Chris Bailey at first opposed his writing off of post war Trotskyism
(similar to Banda’s ‘27 Reasons’). Vangelis, a Greek comrade who joined the Faction soon
after it was formed, initially was very useful in supporting my line of the necessity of
developing political perspectives but we got no support. Vangelis then wrote a homopho-
bic letter to Workers Power and departed following a sharp exchange of documents with
me on this. Chris Bailey began to produce some documents in response to my Draft Per-
spectives for the IF. He basically built on his original ‘Critique of Wolforth’s theory of
Structural Assimilation’ and drew all the reactionary conclusions from the issues which
he had left in the air in that document as well as adopting the ‘third campist’ position of
which Sy Landy had wrongly (at the time) accused him. The split came in January 1989 in
response to my resolution proposing we adopt perspectives before the proposed Euro-
pean Conference in July and defining the IF as a Trotskyist organisation. Dave Bruce and
a few others supported me, but only from a democratic standpoint. They still regarded
themselves as Trotskyists and were, therefore, In opposition to Baileys state capitalist/
Schachtmanite position. The IF still continues but is no longer a Trotskyist organisation.

**POSTSCRIPT**

The Preparatory Committee struggled on, to be replaced by the Workers International in
May 1990. It had betrayed all the possibilities opened up by the expulsion of Healy and
the initial respect the struggles for regeneration won world-wide. It was effectively fin-
ished when the LIT withdrew due to the total impossibility of halting all examination of
their political positions, partly as a result of the pressure of the Internationalist Faction
and partly as a result of the pressure from within the Preparatory Committee itself, which
was not sewn up as tightly is they had planned.

Those strange bedfellows, the Stalinophobic Vargarites and the Stalinophilic Morenoites
had to part company once the internal battle in the WRP was effectively over with the
triump of reaction at the April Congress. The WRP, having no more need of Moreno’s
gabardine once the storm was over. They had now to choose just one bedfellow. They no
longer needed the prestige of or wanted the subordination to the LIT. They chose Stalinophobia and adopted the Varga line. In a repeat of history as farce, the Preparatory Committee of Morenoites and Slaughterites spilt in 1988 in almost the same way as the Parity Committee of Moreno and Lambert split in 1981.

The political expression of the relationship with the LIT in the British class struggle was the close ties established with the RCG around the picket of the South African Embassy by Wayne Poulson (‘Moses Mayekiso is the permanent revolution’) and Chris McBride, which involved big political compromises with their political methods. The ISL, the Hunter led Morenites, continue the same practice with the RCG.

The trajectory of the PreC and its successor, the ‘Workers International’ is politically similar to the Lambertists in its extreme Stalinophobia and capitulation to social democracy and even to open representatives of imperialism (in so far as it has any coherent line at all, much of it is eclectic). The new organisation, formed by stealth in Budapest in May 1990, the Workers International for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International of course, is exactly the same as the PreC had been, with the exception that all pretence at rebuilding anything to now gone. Their line on Eastern Europe, developed by Varga, is almost Schachmanite, equating imperialism with Stalinism and sometimes preferring imperialism to Stalinism. The line on Ireland, as already outlined, is surpassed in relation to Namibia where SWAPO is the main enemy and the direct agents of imperialism, like the IDA are ignored as explained in chapter 8.

A word of explanation is necessary on my own political evolution. I still feel my initial instincts were correct in being drawn to position of Thornett in 1974. In fact is that the documents the WSL, written by John Lister and others, of the late 1970s, on Moreno and their International Perspectives were a basic theoretic foundation for my struggle. I had been in contact with the RIL since April 1987 and they were by far the best in advising me in the conduct of the internal struggle.

It was a struggle for the WRP rank and file against their reactionary and cynical leadership. It was not a question of a fusion an ill defined political basis which really meant a capitulation to the lefts in the Labour party, as the SG/IG link up would have meant. Neither was it a question of abandoning the WRP as individuals and joining Workers Power as they conceived the struggle. It did necessitate the political struggle to break those elements of the WRP that were serious in Trotskyism from their reactionary leaders. It was disappointing that very few opposed the Slaughter leadership and those who did were in the main simply opposed the return of bureaucratic corruption but did not have any adequate political platform to prevent that.

The WRP is still an opportunist confederation of the academics and the aspiring TU bureaucrats. The Workers International is an opportunist international alliance, with Varga’s Stalinophobia as the ruling ideology. Within this alliance the academics have no ideology of their own. They function as intellectual parrots, repeating, and embellishing whichever line is required from the Caudillo. They consist of ever dwindling bands of demoralised followers. They can only mobilise half a dozen for nation demonstrations.
They withdrew from the Ad Hoc Hands off the Gulf Committee on the basis that they needed to be free to turn to the working class. In reality they are now so compromised by their own manoeuvres that all forms of joint work must be abandoned.

As to how the British groups performed, the advice of Alan Thornett was to fight for a platform of defence of democrat rights. This was a real no-goer in the WRP. Workers Power had little advice on that internal struggle, being more concerned with just recruiting me. I joined me RIL in March 1989 when Leyland from the Revolutionary Workers League [RWL], the US sympathising group of the International Trotskyist Committee, pointed out to me that they based themselves precisely on the gains made by the Thornett WSL in its struggle with die WRP and afterwards to build a Trotskyist International. In fact the ITC regarded the documents used by me as part of their heritage.

POST POSTSCRIPT

This work initially set out to be a balance sheet of the WRP (Workers Press). It turned out to be a balance sheet of all the groups that contacted the WRP as well. How they handled the opportunity opened by the WRP Explosion revealed many of the problems of these groups. I hope this will be a contribution to a serious re-examination by those groups of how they performed in this test and may open up a discussion internationally and so prepared for the next struggle to regenerate the Fourth International.

Appendix 1.

The resolution from the S.E. London branch opposing the new line on Stalinism.

South East London Branch Secretary. Doug McEwan

To: The Secretary, Central Committee From: South East London Branch

Resolution

This Branch would like to express our deep going concern at the recent introduction into party discussion of a ‘new concept’. this being that Stalinism is the greatest counter-revolutionary force on the planet. This Branch does not call into question the thoroughly reactionary nature and counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism: nor do we believe Stalinism has a dual nature. What we question is the apparent revision in the historical material method contained in this ‘new concept’.

Some members may regard this difference in views (concepts) with disdain, confusion or indifference, we would warn that a mistakes begins in a small way, and if not checked will grow, the difference over this question are not superficial or trifling but reflect serious and fundamental divergences in theory which, if not fought to their theoretical root will lead to serious error in the party’s practice.

We therefore urge must strongly that the Central Committee review this question at its earliest opportunity and to begin an open debate within the party and its publications.

Doug McEwan Branch Secretary, 5 May 1987
Chronology 1984-90

1984

October & December: Seventh party Congress of the WRP

1985:

June: March to Free the Jailed Miners, 30th; Alexander Pavilion Rally July 1st; Aileen Jennings’ letter to the Political Committee.

September: Bournemouth demonstration against the Labour party Conference. October: WRP split Gerry Healy expelled,

Special Congress on 26/27th November:

First post split public meeting on 27th. December; ICFI suspends the WRP. Workers Press is launched.

1986

January: Series of public meetings begun.

February: 8th party Congress, first session, split with the followers of Dave Hyland, Dave North and the International Committee.

March: Second session of the 8th Congress. April: Delegation to Easter Rising Commemoration in Dublin.

May: Mike Banda and 13 of his followers expelled.

June: Third session of the 8th Congress. Cliff Slaughter visits Argentina and is converted.

November: Special Congress, visit to Sinn Fein Ard Fheis. Irish delegation to Congress slighted. The three-way TU school is held where the relationship with the SG and the IG is deliberately ruptured by the return of ‘The miners were not defeated’ slogan.

December: Bill Hunter visits Argentina and is converted. Simon Pirani opposes Slaughter on the CC on who may attend the Open Conference of Trotskyists. Chris Bailey attends the US Conference of Trotskyists and the attack is opened up on him in his absence. Pilling replaces Bruce as editor of Workers Press. The Perugia Conference takes place.

1987

January: Leon Perez, a Morenoite from the US, is installed in the WRP HQ. Bailey’s US report is challenged. Pirani gives up his opposition. The ‘Paris Agreement’ is signed by Slaughter and Dave Bruce, the GOR and the GOCQI. Slaughter repudiates it as soon as he arrives home. The first of the anti-Irish racist letters from Brian Pearce appears in Workers Press.

24th; The ‘J Upward’ Letter from Slaughter appears, demanding that the re-examination of the history of the relationship of the SLL/WRP to Ireland cease at once. Moreno dies.
February/March: The provocation against the Irish is stepped up, culminating with Pill- ing’s defence the racist Pearce. The 10 Points are debated and accepted by the CC. The Phil Penn affair becomes the main issue in Workers Press

April: 4/5th: Special Congress. Witch-hunt on Downing for opposing the LIT. Reaction ary opportunism triumphant; the Stalinophile Varga supports the Stalinophile Perez and Stalin-ism is branded “the most counter-revolutionary force on the planet”.

11/12th; Preparatory Committee set up. Groups from all over the world, invited to attend, excluded because they would not recognise the LIT as the continuity of Trotskyism. Pirani heads for Buenos Aires.

May: Pirani returns from Argentina, converted. Irish School is held. Relations with the IWL break down. June: Pirani is now the chief Morenoite in the party. Proposes immediate fusion with LIT. Cyril Smith rebels. Downing and Bailey organise meetings for San Franciscan dockers leader Howard Keylor on workers sanctions against South Africa and are charged with expulsion for this in July. Internationalist Faction is formed. CC divides four ways.

July: Downing excluded from the CC, Bruce and Bailey walk out in sympathy. The three are charged with expulsion. The Irish IWL splits from the Preparatory Committee.

August: The pro-Morenoite Bolshevik Faction is formed. Pirani abandons the LIT.

September: Bruce, Bailey and Downing are reinstated on the CC.

November: First session of the Ninth party Congress.

1988

February: Second session of Ninth Congress. Bolshevik Faction splits and walks out. Dave Smith passes the racist remark from the rostrum: “Even the Irish don’t bury people until they are dead.” - The Congress overwhelming endorse the remark by immediately re-electing him to the CC. LIT split from the Preparatory Committee.

March: Internationalist Faction splits from WRP

April: U.S. Open Trotskyist Conference is held in San Francisco. 1989

January: Internationalist Faction splits on whether it is a Trotskyist group.

March: Downing joins the RIL.

May; WRP of Namibia formed.

1990:

April: Preparatory Committee is wound up; the ‘Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International’ is formed in a closed conference in Budapest.
Glossary of publications and organisations (information very dated now!)

Aurora, La: Newspaper of the PORE, Spanish section of the ILRFI

Bolshevik Faction: (BF) Name of Moreno’s opposition tendency whilst he was in the USec and of Bill Hunter’s pro-Moreno faction in the WRP).

Bolshevik Tendency: (BT) split off from the Spartacists, mainly based in San Francisco. Howard Keylor is their best known leader. Have fused with the Permanent Revolution Group of New Zealand in May 1990 and the Gruppe IV International in August 1990 to form the International Bolshevik Tendency.

Communist League (CL): The pro-US SWP Castroite group in Britain. The former Peruvian section of the IC. The Australian group that split off from the IC section, the SLL, and subsequently supported the LIT. Also the name of a further split from The Marxist party in early 1991

Fighting Worker: monthly paper of the RWL, sympathisers to the international Trotskyist Committee.

FI (rebuilt), Fourth International (rebuilt): See ILRFI

FIT: Fourth Internationalist Tendency: US based group of SWP origin who are Mandel supporters in the USec.

GOCQI: Groupe d’Opposition et de Continuite de Na Quatrieme Internationale, Group of Opposition And continuity of the Fourth International: The former group headed by M Varga, consisting mainly of east European Trotskyists. Now part of the WIRFI.

GOR: Gruppo Operatlo Revolucionarlo. ‘Orthodox’ Italian Trotskyist-centrist group headed by Moreno Pasquinelli, of Spartacist origin.

GS: Gruppe Spartakus: German section of the Bolshevik Tendency, formerly the Gruppe IV International. Of Spartacist origin

ICP: International Communist party: British section of the ICFI, mainly based in Bradford.

ICL: International Communist League: Name adopted by the Spartacist League for its international grouping in 1989. A very degenerate sect, they must be regarded as outside the ranks even of Trotskyist centrists. Corruption involves the life style of their leader, James Robertson, and the systematic use of violence against their political opponents


ILG: International Labour Group: Australian group, mainly based in Perth. It is in the Labour party and had strong links with the IC under Healy. Supported his expulsion and opposed the Pr fraud.
ILRFI: International League (for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International): group formerly led by Varga which split from the OCI in 1972. They became the FI (rebuilt) in 1976. Varga split from this group in 1984 to form the GOCQI. They had another serious split in 1987/88 when the majority of the French section liquidated into the USEc group, the LCR. However the Spanish section and some others did continue as Trotskyists under Ramos, the leader of the Spanish section. They changed their name at that time to the ILRFI.

ISG: International Socialist Group: Group formed by the fusion of the IG and the SG

IF: Internationalist Faction: Name of the opposition faction formed in the WRP in June 1987 against its rapid degeneration and opportunism.

IW, International Worker: Newspaper of the ICPIWL (FI),

IWL, International Workers League (FI): English name of the Morenoite LIT, which initials are more commonly used.

ISL, International Socialist League: British section of the LIT led by Bill Hunter.

IWG, Irish Workers Group: Irish affiliates of LRCl. Also the name of an Irish centrist group that formed in the 1960s and was the only major centrist grouping to emerge outside the tradition of republicanism or Stalinism. Forerunner of many of the Irish left groups: the British and Irish Communist Organisation, Peoples Democracy, the League for the Workers Republic, Workers Vanguard (the name of the Irish Healyite group in the early 1970s) etc.

IWL, Irish Workers League: Former group formed by some Trotskyists in Dublin in response to the 10 point call for an Open Conference of Trotskyists put out by the WRP in late 1987.

ISG, Irish Socialist Group: Belfast based group of WRP sympathisers whose leader was Felix Quigley. They supported Banda but disintegrated when Banda renounced Trotskyism.

ICFI or IC, International Committee of the Fourth Interregional: The section of the 1953 split in the Fourth International opposed to liquidation into Stalinism. Its main components were the US SWP led by James Cannon, the French PCI/OCI (Parti/Organisation Communiste Internationaliste) led by Pierre Lambert and the British Healyites (the ‘Group’, later to become the SLL and then the WRP). Never seriously tackled the problems of the Fourth International.

LIT: Spanish initials for the International Workers League: the international grouping of Morenoites whose main centre is the Argentinean MAS.

RSL: Italian group of ex-Morenoites who subsequently re-fused with the LIT in 1987 or 1988.

LWR: Irish group of ex-Lambertists. Their magazine is Workers Republic.
WRP Explosion

LRCI: League for the Reconstruction of a communist International: Workers Power’s international grouping.

LO, Lutte Ouvrière: French group of left semi state capitalists (only the USSR is a degenerated workers state). Large group of several thousand members with very workerist, syndicalist politics.

LRP, League for the Revolutionary party: US based left state capitalist group led by Sy Landy and Walter Dahl.

MAS: The Argentinean section of the LIT (Morenoites).


OCRFI: Organisation for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, the French PCI international grouping.

PCI/OCI, Parti/Organisation Communiste Internationaliste: It is led by Pierre Lambert. They were the first to oppose Pablo in the early 50s and were expelled from the Fourth International for their trouble. Their international grouping is called the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI), or at least it was.

P0, Partido Obrera: Argentinean Trotskyist centrist grouping, originally affiliated to the IC and then to the OCRFI. It afterwards had an international ties with the Bolivian POR. It is a left moving group (or was until recently) which made many correct criticisms of the LIT.

POR, Workers Revolutionary party (in Spanish): Largest is the party of Lora in Bolivia, also many other Trotskyist centrist parties. Another version is the PRr, but there is a difference in Spanish between ‘obrera’ and ‘trabajadora’. ‘Trabajadora’ refers to ‘those who work’ or the ‘toiling masses’, obviously including the peasantry, whereas ‘obrera’ refers to the working class.

PORE, WRP of Spain. Spanish section of the ILRFI.PTS, Partido de Trabajadores por el Socialismo: Argentinean split from the MAS in 1988.

PD, Peoples Democracy: Irish section of the USec.

RCP, Revolutionary Communist party: Group who emerged from a 1974 split in the British SWP. They operate a front called the Irish Freedom Movement and split with the RCG on an extremely maverick ‘Trotskyist’ line. Also the main post war Trotskyist group from 1945-50.

RCG, Revolutionary Communist Group: a product of a 1974 split from the SWP, the Stalinist side of the split with the RCP.
RIL, Revolutionary Internationalist League: British section of the International Trotskyist Committee.


RWP, Revolutionary Workers party (Sri Lanka): Trotskyist-centrist group led by Edmund Samarakkody with international links with the COR of Italy.

RWL, Revolutionary Workers League: US sympathising section of the ITC

The Spark, The British and US sections of Lutte Ouvrière. Also the name of an Australian group led by Paddy Collins which had close ties with the IC.

SG, Socialist Group: The name of the group led by Alan Thornett in the period between the split with Sean Matgamna’s WSL/Socialist Organiser and the fusion with the International Group to form the International Socialist Group.


SLP, Socialist Labour party: US group of revolutionary syndicalists.

Socialist Outlook: Magazine sold in the Labour party, The name of Healy’s paper in the Labour party in the 1950s.

SO, Socialist Organiser: Right moving group e.g. two nationists on Ireland and Israel/Palestine, State capitalist/third campists on the USSR. Sean Matgamna, a quirky opportunist. is their leader.

SWP US, Socialist Workers party (US): Founded and led by James P Cannon. It was the main Trotskyist party in the world, and developed under Trotsky’s personal guidance. It has now openly renounce Trotskyism and has left the USec. Castroite Stalinists.

SWP UK, Socialist Workers party (UK): State Capitalist group which broke from Trotskyism in 1952, refusing to support North Korea against imperialist attack. Inveterate popular frontists.


LTT, Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency: Group of Belgium (LOR) and German (ISD) ‘orthodox Trotskyists’ who have a mainly propagandist existence. They have, however, correct Trotskyist positions on many issues.

TPI, Proletarian Insurrectional Tendency: US non-Trotskyist group of revolutionary syndicalist workers who participated as a consultative group in the U.S. Open Trotskyist Conference.

USec or USFI, United Secretariat of the Fourth International: The majority in the 1953 split which was led by Michael Pablo and Earnest Mandel. Has chronically adapted to Stalin-
ism, social democracy and petty bourgeois nationalism. It still comprises the vast majority of Trotskyist-centrist groups. In 1953 it was called the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, becoming the United Secretariat after the 1963 reunion with the US SWP. The Morenoites joined in 1964 and split in 1979.

Verite, La: The newspaper of the French Trotskyists from the 30s. Varga took the title with him in the split of 1973 but lost it to the FI (rebuilt) in 1984.

Working Class Opposition: Newspaper of the IWP (FI), up to 1989, one of two US sections of the Morenoite LIT mainly based San Francisco, the other being the ISL (FI). Leon Perez was the former head of the IWP. Apparently the ISL is now the LIT section and the IWP supports the PTS of Argentina. They are sympathising sections.

WP, Workers Power: The outcome of a split in 1975 from the SWP. It is a Trotskyist-centrist group which publishes a newspaper of the same name. British section of the LRCI.

WSL, Workers Socialist League: The group built by Alan Thomett and John Lister following the 1974 split with the WRP. US group, of the same name, who supported the TILC and the SG but broke from Thornett’s politics after the fusion with the IG and the consequent entry into USec. Also name of SA group.

WIRFI: Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, Successor to the Preparatory Committee. Its main section was the WRP [Workers Press] and it has small groups led by the Hungarian, Michael Varga, based in Paris, which compromise the ‘East European sections’. It also has colonial implantations in Namibia and Ireland.

WIL, Workers International League: A group who split from the WRP (News Line] led by Richard Price. Also one of the two war time Trotskyist groups.

WL, Workers League: US sympathising section of the ICFI.

Workers News: Newspaper of the Workers International League.

Workers Press: Newspaper of the WRP.

WP: Workers Revolutionary party: Founded in 1973 as a successor to the Socialist Labour League. Two WRPs came into being after the 1985 split, distinguished by their newspapers: WRP (Workers Press) and WRP (News Line). In fact there were three WRPs after the Hyland group split in February 1986 but they soon renamed themselves the International Communist party [ICP]. Also name of Greek Healyite party, (EEK in Greek) and the Bolivian party of Lora (LOR) and many other Spanish speaking Trotskyist centrist groups.

Workers Voice: Paper of the Internationalist Socialist League, the Morenoite British group. It has the same name as a Maoist group’s publication, the Communist Workers Organisation, just to confuse everybody. Also name of a magazine published by the US LRP.
No God but the organised strength of the international proletariat led by revolutionary socialists will liberate the whole of humanity from the barbarism that now imminently threatens them, not just in the semi-colonies, where it never went away despite the obvious capacity of humanity’s productive forces to banish hunger, disease and lack of health care, poverty, illiteracy, alienation, depression and mental illness caused by the inhuman social relations of the private ownership of the means of production by bankers and capitalist, but now in the heart of the beast itself, moving in from the peripheral PIIGS countries of Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain to the citadels of global finance capital itself, the US, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, China etc, where the monster must finally be slain. Bring it on!

Gerry Downing in Dublin in November 2011
The WRP explosion in October 1985 had a profound impact on all those who regard themselves as Trotskyists throughout the world. The fragmentation of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI or IC) (1), one of the main claimants, historically, to the ‘continuity of Trotskyism’ was a dramatic event, whose repercussions are still being felt.

This is my political evaluation of the WRP (Workers Press) in the period after it split with and subsequently expelled its founder and long time British Trotskyist and IC leader, Gerry Healy (2), in October 1985.

The basic premise that I have set out to demonstrate is, that despite sincere efforts on the part of the rank-and-file of the party’s members and some of its leaders, it failed in the task it set itself in the immediate aftermath of the expulsion of Healy; that of the regeneration of Trotskyism and the orientation to the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

The revolutionary impulse of the party to seek out the reasons for the degeneration of the Trotskyist movement in the post-war period was wrecked because those leaders, who had been responsible, with Healy, for many of the betrayals of Trotskyist principles in the past were unable to overcome their own corruption.

The Press of the Socialist Fight Group