

DEATH AGONY OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Workers Power, 1983

Part 1.

Trotsky's defence and development of the communist programme, 1933-1940

At its foundation in 1938, the Fourth International was the only consistent revolutionary communist tendency in the world. Other tendencies emerging from the degenerating Comintern either collapsed into reformism like the Right Opposition (Bukharin, Brandler, Maurin, Lovestone), or locked themselves up in ossified sectarianism (Urbahns, Bordiga). Many of the leading figures of the International Left Opposition - prominent founders of Comintern sections - failed to resist the pressures arising from the terrible defeats of the working class in the 1930s.

The defeats in Germany, Spain, France and above all the bloody triumph of Stalin's bonapartist clique in the USSR, propelled Left Oppositionists such as Nin, Sneevliet and Rosmer into centrist waverings. This included an unwillingness to support Trotsky's struggle to found a new International. Trotsky had hoped and expected to rally wider forces and a broader spectrum of historic communist leaders from the Leninist period of the Comintern into the new International.

It was not to be. The International Communist League (ICL), and then the Movement for the Fourth International (MFI), alone held to the fundamental principles and tactics of the first four congresses of the Comintern. They alone developed these principles and tactics to face the enormous challenge of the 1930s.

The bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution had immediate repercussions beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. In the Comintern its negative effects were felt over the question of the KPD's failure to lead an insurrection in 1923. Under Zinoviev's leadership it went on to commit a series of disastrous ultra-left errors (e.g. the rising in Estonia). The Comintern sections were heavily bureaucratized under the slogan of "Bolshevisation". National leaderships were selected on the basis of their loyalty to the leading faction of the CPSU.

With the ascendancy of the Stalin-Bukharin bloc, the Comintern swung rapidly into right opportunism in its relations to the British Trade Union bureaucracy. The bloc with them - the Anglo-Russian Committee - was maintained despite the betrayal of 1926 by the TUC. Then, in 1927, after a policy of liquidating the Chinese CP into the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang led to a catastrophe in Shanghai, the Comintern veered left again. It launched the Canton Commune. This ill-prepared rising was brutally suppressed by the former honorary member of the Comintern, Chiang Kai Shek. In Russia itself the emerging bureaucratic caste - headed by Stalin - crushed party democracy, used police methods against all oppositions and vacillated wildly in its economic policies.

On all of these issues, the Left Opposition, led by Leon Trotsky, waged a determined struggle to return the Comintern to the revolutionary course it had followed at its first four congresses. Originating in the Russian Party, the Left Opposition, after Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet

Union, established itself as an International (external) Faction of the Comintern, with the expressed aim of reforming the International, its sections, and the one state where a section held power - the Soviet Union.

The positions of the International Left Opposition on the Soviet Union, Germany 1923, Britain 1926 and China 1927, were based on the programmatic gains of the Bolshevik party and the Theses and Resolutions passed by the first four congresses of the Comintern.

The Comintern, built in the post-war revolutionary period of 1919-1923, developed an organisation and a political method that stand as models for communists to this day. Its Congresses were democratic forums where the best communist leaders of the day could debate their tactics. Its Executive Committee (ECCI) and its network of agents were the centralised structure through which the decisions taken at those Congresses could be effectively implemented internationally.

The Comintern systematised the method of democratic centralism as the form of organisation for revolutionary combat parties and the world party of communist revolution. It drew a sharp line between communism and reformism by generalising from the experience of the Russian Revolution, and making its goal the revolutionary conquest of power by the proletariat and the internationalisation of the revolution. Not content with a mere declaration of aims, the Comintern sought to build up a number of strong active sections, capable of achieving these aims through the use of revolutionary tactics.

To this end the Comintern from 1919-22 subjected the ever changing world political and economic situation and the balance of class forces thus engendered, to constant scrutiny. It operated with an understanding of the imperialist epoch as one of capitalist decay, wars and revolutions. But it also understood the importance of periods within this epoch - revolutionary or pre-revolutionary periods, periods of stability or retreat, counter-revolutionary periods, etc. On the basis of its understanding of perspectives as a guide to action, it was able to re-focus its programme and adjust its tactical line as different periods opened up after the war.

Thus at the first two congresses the principal slogans were rightly directed at the formation of Soviets and the struggle for power. The victory of the Russian Revolution, the upheavals in Germany, the Hungarian events all pointed to the viability of this line of advance.

However, with the defeats of 1919-20 in Germany, Hungary and Italy, thanks to the treachery of the Second International parties and the vacillation of the centrist USPD and PSI, the Comintern immediately re-examined its perspectives. At the Third Congress in June 1921 these defeats, their impact on the working class and the temporary respite they gave to the principal capitalist governments were acknowledged.

The line of advance was changed from the immediate conquest of power to "conquest of the masses". The sections utilised the method employed by the Bolsheviks in February to September 1917 - the method of the united front with reformist parties and the demand that they break with the bourgeoisie and base themselves on the masses.

This method led directly to the "workers' government" slogan and to transitional demands as a means of winning the masses to communist leadership. These positions were embodied in the Third Congress' Theses on Tactics. They were elaborated further in the Fourth Congress' Theses on Tactics (December 1922), the Programme of Action in the Unions (Third Congress) and the Theses on the United Front (Fourth Congress).

In addition to its general tactical and programmatic guidelines, the Comintern developed positions on a whole range of specific questions. On the National Question, and later the Anti-Imperialist United Front, its Theses pointed to the progressive nature of national liberation struggles, and the duty of communists to support them against imperialism. But at the same time it stressed the centrality of maintaining the independence of the working class in the oppressed nations.

National liberation for the Comintern was not the end goal. It was a component part of the struggle for proletarian revolution.

Work amongst the oppressed masses - women, youth, blacks, the unemployed, the peasantry - was stressed by the Comintern as obligatory for Communists. In this the Comintern broke resolutely with the labour aristocratic aloofness of the Second International which had given scant attention to the colonial masses and the oppressed' nationalities.

At the centre of all of the Comintern's positions lay two fundamental principles - the political independence of the working class, that is to say, of its programme; and the use of tactics like the united front as a means to win the masses to the communist goal, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The first condition of a tactical compromise was that the Communists publicly express their strategic positions and retain the freedom to criticise their temporary allies.

The Comintern never completed its work of re-elaborating the Marxist programme. The bloc of restorationists and bureaucratic centrists under Bukharin and Stalin eventually enshrined their reactionary slogan of "socialism in one country" in the Comintern's degenerate programme.

The failure of the Comintern to complete its tasks of programmatic re-elaboration and re-focusing was to be of enormous significance to those communists who fought to refound a communist international after the degeneration of the Comintern.

All of these principles were sacrificed by the Stalinised Comintern.

In Britain the Trade Union leaders were praised, not fought in, 1926; in China the banner of the proletariat was pulled down by the communists while that of the bourgeois nationalists was hoisted up.

In the ultra-left "Third Period" the Comintern committed opposite, but equally disastrous errors. The programme of the Sixth Congress in 1928 infused with the theory and practice of "Socialism in One Country", abandoned the internationalism of the early Comintern.

Sections became pawns of Stalin's foreign policy. The united front was rejected in favour of the Red Front, of "United Front from below" a tactic predicated on the idea that Social Democracy and Fascism were twins. The programme itself was confined to abstract generalities about capitalism. It failed, as the positions of the early Comintern had not, to base itself on the most recent vital experiences of the international class struggle.

The Sixth Congress highlighted the thoroughgoing Stalinisation of the Comintern. The rotten fruit of this process was finally borne in 1933 when the pride of the Communist International, the KPD, was destroyed by fascism without a fight. It was not primarily the guns and knives of the fascists that defeated the German working class.

It was the treachery of the Social Democracy and the ultra-left politics of the KPD. Their abandonment of the united front led directly to the defeat in Germany. This event was decisive. It exposed the criminal policies of Stalinism. Yet not one single Comintern section acknowledged this.

Stalin's line on Germany was endorsed retrospectively by all of them.

The Comintern thus proved definitively incapable of learning from its errors. It was dead for revolution.

Trotsky and the left Opposition held a position that, up to 1933, the German defeat and its aftermath, the Comintern could have been reformed. The International Left Opposition repeatedly requested to be re-admitted to the Comintern as a faction. This in no way hindered the International Left Opposition from raising its position on Britain, China and later on Germany and the rise of fascism. Trotsky was clear that the Comintern had abandoned the revolutionary programme at its Sixth Congress, when it adopted Bukharin's programme.

Thus the programme. of the Comintern was not decisive for Trotsky's reform perspective. At the same time the definitive class collaborationist turn (crossing of class lines) of the Comintern did not come until 1935 with the Stalin- Llval pact and the turn to the Popular Front policy in France, and later internationally.

For Trotsky, what was decisive in the reform perspective was that during its revolutionary period, the Comintern had, in certain key countries, organised a mass revolutionary vanguard. The existence of this vanguard, particularly in Germany where the fate of Europe was being decided, was seen by the International Left Opposition as a potential lever of reform in the Comintern. It was potentially a very powerful force that could be turned against the Stalin clique.

But the condition of this was that it could remove its leaders before their policy led to its own destruction at the hands of fascism. This consideration, the existence of a mass vanguard, determined the Left Opposition's orientation up to 1933. The destruction of the mass KPD and the failure of any other section to respond correctly to this event, undermined the basis of the reform perspective.

The other communist parties had, themselves, withered under the impact of the policies of the "Third Period". The loss of membership was dramatic, reducing many of the parties to small sects. In France the PCF, which in 1924 claimed 110,000 members against the SFIO's 35,000 was down to a claimed membership of 30,000 in 1932, with probably no more than half of that number being active members. In Britain the same process, on a smaller scale, was evident. By 1930 party membership had slumped to 2,500, less than half the number claimed in 1922. It was a relatively huge drop in numbers from the 1926 highpoint of 10,000 members.

The perspective of reform had to be changed. Max Shachtman, a leading member of the International Left Opposition in 1933, spelled this out in his foreword to *The History and Principles of the Left Opposition*. 'The collapse of the German Communist Party removes from the dwindling ranks of the Communist International the last of its sections possessing any mass following or influence... Suffice it to say that the German events, and the bureaucratic self contentment and unconcern, deepening of the errors and disintegration of Stalinism and its parties which have followed them bring us to the ineluctable conclusion: That the Communist International has been strangled by Stalinism, is bankrupt, is beyond recovery or restoration on Marxist foundations". 1

Thus it was the ability of the Stalinist bureaucracy to strangle the Comintern and the masses grouped within it, that proved that those masses were not, and could not become, a lever for reform. Henceforth the Trotskyists set out to rebuild new parties and a new International.

The task became one of breaking the masses from the Comintern, social democracy and all forms of centrism, and winning them to a new International. In a period of defeats (the 1930s), this proved enormously difficult. However, the ILO/ICL/MFI forces kept alive the traditions, methods and theoretical conquests of the communist movement. As such their struggle was a pledge for their future. Trotsky himself realised the importance of this achievement, limited as it may seem to those who, impatient to become leaders of the masses, end up regarding communism as an obstacle between them and the masses:

"How the new International will take form, through what stages it will pass, what final shape it will assume - this no-one can foretell today.

And indeed there is no need to do so: historical events will show us.

But it is necessary to begin by proclaiming a programme that meets the tasks of our epoch. On the basis of this programme it is necessary to mobilise co-thinkers, the pioneers of the new International. No other road is possible".2

Under Trotsky's guidance the International Left Opposition and its descendants (ICL/MFI) had correctly analysed the class nature, role and dynamic of fascism - a mass movement based on the petit-bourgeoisie and lumpenproletariat, whose service to finance capital was to crush into atoms the proletariat's organisations. The revolutionary tactical answer to this threat was the anti-fascist workers' united front.

Such a tactic could have allowed the communists to expose the bankruptcy of the reformist leaders without jeopardising the united struggle of the working class. It could have crushed fascism, allowed the communists to win the leadership of the working class and thereby enabled them to go

forward to the seizure of power. The Trotskyists analysed the degenerative process in the USSR. The isolation of the Soviet state and the extreme material and cultural backwardness of Russian society at the time of the revolution had provided fertile soil for the growth of a vast parasitic bureaucracy. This caste, headed by the Stalin faction, had usurped political power from the working class, terrorising and annihilating its vanguard.

The Trotskyists explained this degeneration at each stage and formulated the strategy of political revolution against the bureaucracy as the only means of restoring proletarian political power in the degenerated workers' state. At the same time, the ICL/MFI correctly maintained a policy of unconditional defence of the remaining gains of the October Revolution (statified industry, monopoly of foreign trade, planning) against the capitalist restorationist efforts of the imperialists.

In France and Spain, the Trotskyists analysed and fought the Stalinist and Social Democratic class collaborationist policy of the Popular Front, which subordinated the organisations and interests of the working class to the policy of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Trotsky guided the small groups of the Fourth International movement in the use of tactics adapted to conditions in the more stable imperialist democracies Britain and the USA. In these countries and in France he developed "entryism" as a short or medium term tactical manoeuvre aimed at placing revolutionaries at the head of vanguard elements of the proletariat unwilling (temporarily) to break with the mass reformist organisations.

This tactic involved the creation of a revolutionary communist wing and a sharp 'struggle against left centrist "revolutionary" opposition as well as the right-wing bureaucratic leadership. Whilst the development of centrist tendencies by the reformist parties was the context of entry, in no sense was it the task of Trotskyists to create such a centrist bloc or themselves to advance centrist policies. No inevitable stage of centrist leaderships or parties was envisaged, let alone advocated, by the Fourth Internationalists.

Trotsky also developed the tactic of splits and fusions in relation to leftward moving centrist organisations, on the basis of winning them to a clear revolutionary programme. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries (Asia, Latin America, Africa), the Trotskyist movement, even where it participated in the Anti-Imperialist United Front with non proletarian elements, fought for the programme of proletarian, permanent revolution, against the "stages theory" - a Menshevik theory resurrected by Stalin, which subordinated the independent interests of the proletariat to the national (bourgeois) revolution.

By 1938, with the second imperialist world war imminent, Trotsky drew together the fundamental doctrines and method of the communist tradition (from Marx to the first four Congresses of the Comintern) extending, developing and enriching them with the lessons learnt by the Trotskyists since 1923. This resulted in the production of a programme 'The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International' - the Transitional Programme.³ The FI was founded on the basis of this programme. We affirm the absolute correctness of the FI's formation in 1938.

Indeed, had the FI not been founded in 1938, there would undoubtedly have been an even greater dispersion and weakening of revolutionary forces during the war and even less possibility for the voice of revolutionary internationalism to be heard. Neither the organisation nor the 'internationalism' of the centrists (British ILP, French PSOP, Spanish POUM etc) stood the test of war. In no way can the later disintegration be attributed to the FI's 'premature' formation.

We also reject the linked error that only mass national parties with deep roots in the proletariat of their respective countries can form an International. This conception is a thoroughly nationalist, Second Internationalist one.

Faced with the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals and the hesitations of the centrists, the internationalist revolutionary programme of the Trotskyists required an international party. The centrists who argued against the founding of the FI had themselves set up national parties. This double standard showed how, for the centrists, an international party was a luxury, thus betraying their nationalism. If the party is the programme then this applies also to the World

Party.

As soon as a developed international programme exists, as soon as a stable international leadership, united around this programme has been established, then there can be no cause for delay. This was the case in 1938. Even though the political leadership of the FI existed mainly in the person of Leon Trotsky, this was initially sufficient in the period of the FI's formation. He was, in many respects, an embodiment of the FI's continuity with Bolshevism.

The FI was an "International" which unlike the First, Second and Third did not consist of mass workers' organisations. It comprised in most countries propaganda groups struggling to escape the isolation that their numbers and the murderous hostility of the Stalinists forced on them. Partial exceptions were the USA where the SWP had developed systematic agitation in the blue collar unions and led sections of workers on a local basis (Minneapolis), and the deep roots of the Vietnamese Trotskyists in the proletariat of Saigon.

But, if the Fourth International was weak in numbers it was in Trotsky's words "strong in doctrine, programme, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres. Trotsky's perspective was that the national sections of the FI and the international itself were posed to develop rapidly into a serious force within the proletariat. In the proletariat's crisis of leadership which the imperialist war would immeasurably sharpen, the FI would, given the correct programme and a firm and seasoned international leadership, develop into a decisive mass force capable of resolving the crisis. That this perspective did not materialise in no way invalidates in our view the decision to found the FI in 1938. Trotsky's FI, its programme, its theses and its cadres, despite the later degeneration, saved and communicated to a later generation the precious heritage of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

We stand in the tradition of the FI founded by Trotsky. Its programme, the Transitional Programme, represented the culmination of the programmatic work of previous generations of revolutionary Marxists. It was developed on the shoulders of all previous Marxist programmes - the Communist Manifesto, the programmatic declaration of the Bolshevik Party, and above all, on the principles and tactics developed by the revolutionary Comintern.

It represented a transcending of the old Social Democratic programme, divided into minimum and maximum demands, which in the imperialist epoch enshrined the reformist practice of the Second International, and developed instead, on the basis of work already started in the programmatic debates of the revolutionary Comintern, a system of transitional demands.

The Transitional Programme was, after Trotsky's death, both misused and misunderstood by his supposed disciples. As we shall see it was eventually liquidated as an operative programme and worshipped as a lifeless idol. Unlike the Third International, the Fourth had no proletarian masses grouped beneath its banner. Its integrity and its ability to survive was concentrated in the scientific correctness of its programme and in its cadres' ability to win the proletarian vanguard to it.

Defence of the programme against its vastly stronger opponents; utilisation in the class struggle; the development and re-elaboration of it to meet new situations and new tasks, were heavy responsibilities for a cadre weak in numbers with limited class struggle experience and with few theoreticians of stature. A correct understanding of the Transitional Programme - its nature, doctrine and method is thus vital to Trotskyists who seek to rediscover and re-appropriate these historic gains - long distorted and obscured by the 'theory' and practice of Trotsky's epigones.

Trotsky's programme marked the successful resolution of programmatic problems that originated with the Erfurt Programme of 1891. It represented the programmatic resolution of the problem of the disjuncture between the struggle over immediate and partial demands and the struggle for power.

The old minimum programme was limited to demands within the framework of capitalism. These included demands for the amelioration of the proletariat's conditions - the 8 hour day, measures of social welfare, improvement of wages, and a series of democratic demands universal suffrage and a sovereign assembly, an elected judiciary, the dissolution of the standing army and the creation of a people's militia etc. These demands did not transcend the concessions possible within the

framework of bourgeois society though in many countries the most militant, indeed revolutionary, methods of struggle would be necessary to win them.

In the early 1890s, Engels, who supported the Erfurt Programme with reservations, hoped that the mobilisation of the masses by parliamentary and trade union means to fight for these goals would result in a decisive struggle that would crack the framework of the capitalist state and the bureaucratic, semi-absolutist regimes of many continental states, opening the road to proletarian power. Engels' successors (Kautsky, Bernstein, Bebel etc) transformed this perspective into one of peaceful evolutionary growth in the present, combined with an inevitable collapse or catastrophe for capitalism at some time in the distant future. They thus falsified Engels' perspective and the strategic and tactical methods of the founders of Marxism.

In practice, in a period of capitalist expansion (the opening phase" of the imperialist epoch) significant concessions were made to the working class simply on the basis of the threat posed by the growth (in numbers and in votes gained) by the workers' parties and in response to trade union action. The leaders of the social democracy, for their part, were content to achieve piecemeal reforms and build up the parties and unions - ie to struggle for reforms outside and apart from the perspective of proletarian power. The latter became a distant 'final goal', the subject of abstract propaganda. The strategy of the conquest of power was replaced by the isolated tactic of social reform.

Thus a chasm opened between the maximum and minimum programme. Bernstein, the father of revisionism argued that this contradiction should be resolved by Social Democracy daring to appear as what it was - a democratic party of social reform. The 'final goal' was nothing, the 'movement' was everything.

The radical left of Social Democracy, especially Lenin and Luxemburg, argued for revolutionary tactics in pursuit of the major demands of the minimum programme (ie mass strike, armed insurrection etc to attain the democratic republic). They fought to purge the ranks of the workers' parties of the revisionists and reformists. They noted and analysed the gathering forces within modern capitalism making for reaction at home and wars abroad (Imperialism).

In a partial manner the prewar Social Democratic Left posed the necessity of transcending the Erfurt style programme and the associated parliamentary and pure trade union tactics. They raised the 'final goal' as the strategic object of revolutionary tactics. Within the left, Trotsky, despite a series of vacillating positions, particularly on the question of the Party and Bolshevik/Menshevik unity, came nearest to completely transcending the minimum/maximum divide.

The theory of Permanent Revolution, at that time applied only to Russia by Trotsky, raised as the immediate goal of the proletariat (with the mass strike and insurrection to achieve it) a proletarian revolution and a workers' government that would not stop at solving the democratic tasks, but would press on, to fulfil the tasks of a socialist revolution. In a backward country like Russia, made up predominantly of peasants, Trotsky recognised that the proletarian revolution would have to win the support of the peasants and would have to be linked to the internationalisation of the revolution. However even Trotsky did not develop a fully rounded programmatic alternative to the Erfurt programme.

The "Marxist Centre" of Social Democracy, represented by Bebel and Kautsky, refused to unite theory and practice as Bernstein and Luxemburg, in different ways, wished. They defended an increasingly abstract inevitabilist Marxism against Bernstein. They defended parliamentary and trade union cretinism against Luxemburg.

The sharpening crises, economic and political, of the pre-war period, heralded an epoch of wars and revolutions, that made the Erfurt synthesis a disguise for the rise of a conservative, counter-revolutionary bureaucracy within the workers' organisations. The Second International, under pressure from the proletariat and the Left, was committed to opposing any European war (which it defined in advance as imperialist on the part of all the major powers) and of transforming any such war into the occasion for struggling to overthrow capitalism. In August 1914, the voting of war

credits by the German SPD indicated the renunciation by the leaders of that party (and they were soon followed by all the major parties of the Second International) of their formal Marxism, in favour of social chauvinism.

The Bolsheviks were the only major party to carry out their pre-war promises and obligations via the policy of revolutionary defeatism ("Turn the imperialist war into a civil war"; "Defeat of one's own country is the lesser evil"). Elsewhere minorities fought the social chauvinists (Liebknecht - "The main enemy is at home"). Bolshevism developed an understanding of the real roots of the war in the theory of imperialism as a new epoch of capitalist crisis, war and revolution.

The Bolsheviks also developed revolutionary methods of struggle for power - the united front, the mass strike, armed insurrection - and an understanding of the nature of proletarian state power - the smashing of the bourgeois bureaucratic military state machine and its replacement with soviet power, the commune-type state etc. These theoretical and practical conquests made Bolshevism by 1917, the crucible for the creation of a new programme - a programme dominated by the posing of the need for the proletariat to seize power as an immediate task.

This did not obliterate the need to raise immediate and partial demands, but it posed the question of revolutionary methods of struggle, and of demands which met vital and immediate needs (war, famine, unemployment, inflation, economic chaos - all caused by the convulsive crises of imperialism). The struggle for such demands organised and directed workers towards the struggle for power. These transitional demands utilised by the Bolsheviks in 1917 (see Lenin's programmatic pamphlet "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat it") became part of the international proletariat's armoury as a result of the work of the Comintern between 1919 and 1923.

In the Third and Fourth Congresses the CI systematised the United Front tactic, the action programme of immediate and transitional demands, the workers' government as means of overcoming the ideological subjective weakness of the proletariat evidenced by the existence of reformist leaderships, in order to facilitate its struggle for the conquest of power.

The CI broke resolutely from the Kautskyian heritage of the Second International. First of all it recognised the nature of the epoch as transitional - transitional between capitalism and socialism. This was not an objective process. It existed thanks to objective conditions, but its resolution depended on a struggle between parties and classes. From this analysis the CI concluded: "The character of the transitional epoch makes it obligatory for all communist parties to raise to the utmost their readiness for struggle.

Any struggle may turn into a struggle for power. Thus, in the imperialist epoch, where immediate demands clashed with capitalist priorities, direct action for such demands posed the possibility of developing into a struggle for power. Therefore, revolutionaries has to stress the interlinked nature of all proletarian demands, and the need to fight for all demands and to organise itself at every level for this. Because this confronted capitalism it was necessary to state the consequence: destroy capitalism to defend ourselves.

"The communist parties do not put forward any minimum programme to strengthen and improve the tottering structure of capitalism. The destruction of that structure remains their guiding aim and their immediate mission. But to carry out this mission the communist parties must put forward demands whose fulfilment is an immediate and urgent working class need, and they must fight for these demands in mass struggle, regardless of whether they are compatible with the profit economy of the capitalist class or not."6 And again, "If the demands correspond to the vital needs of the broad proletarian masses and if these masses feel they cannot exist unless these demands are met, then the struggle for these demands will become the starting point of the struggle for power.

In place of the minimum programme of the reformists and centrists, the Communist International puts the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for a system of demands which in their totality disintegrate the power of the bourgeoisie, organise the proletariat, represent stages in the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, and each of which expresses in itself the need of the broadest masses, even if the masses themselves are not yet consciously in favour of the proletarian

dictatorship."7

The Comintern developed the idea of a bridge to facilitate the transition from the struggle within capitalism to the struggle against capitalism. Clearly this bridge, this system of demands, this programme, had to correspond to objective conditions - the state of the economy, the actual needs of the masses, the nature of the period, the recent experiences of the international class struggle and their impact on the masses. These considerations guided, for example, the various action programmes developed by the CI. .

However, by the time that the CI came to debate its programme the authors of the Theses on Tactics - the CI's "Transitional Programme" had been expelled. The "scholastic" Bukharin, acting as hired scribe for the bureaucratic philistine Stalin, drew up the programme. In order to cover over the Comintern's errors and justify the reactionary theory and practice of "Socialism in One Country" the programme was reduced to being an abstract, redundant document. The transitional method was gone. The need to relate the programme to objective conditions went with it. Trotsky in his critique of Bukharin's document defended and developed the Comintern's earlier position:

"But a programme of revolutionary action naturally cannot be approached as a bare collection of abstract propositions without any relation to all that has occurred during these epoch-making years. A programme cannot, of course, go into a description of the events of the past, but it must proceed from these events, base itself upon them, encompass them, and relate to them. A programme by the position it takes, must make it possible to understand all the major facts of the struggle of the proletariat, and all the important facts relating to the ideological struggle within the Comintern. If this is true with regard to the programme as a whole, then it is all the truer with regard to that part of it which is specifically devoted to the question of strategy and tactics. Here, in the words of Lenin, in addition to what has been conquered there must also be registered that which has been lost which can be transformed into a 'conquest' if it has been understood and assimilated. The proletarian vanguard needs not a catalogue of truisms but a manual of action. "8

Confronting the task of developing a new International, Trotsky had to develop a Transitional Programme. The fundamental features of the 1938 programme, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" embodied the lessons of the Comintern and its collapse. In the first place it was a programme that corresponded to the objective situation - acute economic crisis, impending war, the rise of fascism, the collapse of the Communist International.

It was sharply focused towards resolving the crisis of leadership within the pre-revolutionary situation that these factors were bound to create. Those who accuse this programme of "catastrophism" should consider the magnitude of the catastrophe - the war - that followed its publication. Like Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto, it anticipated a sharp crisis and tried to orient the working class towards a revolutionary outcome. In this sense it was not fatalist, but imbued with the spirit of revolutionary optimism and the will to triumph over the most daunting obstacles.

It proceeded from the experience of the class struggle over the preceding ten years. Unlike Bukharin, Trotsky had nothing to hide in his programme. The lessons of the German defeat, the Popular Front in France and Spain, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, the anti imperialist struggle in China were all encompassed in the programme.

Its slogans flowed from the experience - positive and negative - of these momentous events.

The programme was an international programme. The impending war pointed to the urgent need for an international line of march. Trotsky provided it, drawing on the experience of the MFI's sections, analysing the contradictions and inter-connections within the world capitalist system and the USSR. In the Transitional Programme is a codification of Permanent Revolution. That is, the revolution must internationalise itself or go down to defeat. In backward countries the tasks of the democratic revolution can only be solved by proletarian revolution.

This whole strategy can only be fulfilled if the crisis of leadership is resolved by revolutionary communist parties winning the loyalty of the masses and leading them into permanent revolution

against imperialism.

Most important, the Transitional Programme was - like the famous Section Two in the Communist Manifesto, the Theses on Tactics of the Comintern, the "Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It" of the Bolsheviks - an action programme, focused towards the tasks of the period ahead. It was truly a guide to action. In the "Review of the Founding Conference" in 1938, the FI recognised this crucial aspect of the programme: "What a contrast it offers to the vague generalisations and deceptive abstractions which the official leaderships of the working class offer as guides to action in the present tumultuous world situation!

It is not, or rather is not so much, the basic programme of the Fourth International, as it is its programme of action for the immediate period in which we live" 9

Its programme of action for the proletariat was transitional. Its demands were interlinked and allied to the same goal - the seizure of state power by the proletariat. For this reason every demand designed to meet the needs of the masses (against unemployment, for example), is linked to the struggle for workers' control, the formation of factory committees, mass action, factory occupations, etc. These fighting organs of the proletariat culminate in the keystone of the programme, the call for Soviets as organs of struggle against the capitalist regime.

The demands for a sliding scale of wages and hours, for the opening of the books, etc, expose the anarchy of capitalism, pose the essence of the planned economy and create the organised forces both to win and exercise the state power necessary to effect a transition to a fully planned economy.

Only such a programme allows the fight for socialist revolution to be linked to the everyday struggles of the proletariat. Trotsky spelt this out in the programme itself:

"The strategic task of the Fourth International lies not in reforming capitalism, but in its overthrow. Its political aim is the conquest of power by the proletariat for the purpose of expropriating the bourgeoisie. However, the achievement of this strategic task is unthinkable without the most considered attention to all, even small and partial, questions of tactics. All sections of the proletariat - all its layers, occupations and groups - should be drawn into the revolutionary movement. The present epoch is distinguished not because it frees the revolutionary party from day to day work but because it permits this work to be carried out indissolubly with the actual tasks of the revolution".
10

The means for doing this was the system of transitional demands, demands which start with today's needs (not today's mentality of the workers, a fact Trotsky repeated to SWP (US) members) and lead to the revolution. Since Trotsky's death, many avowed Trotskyists have used individual demands, plucked from the system of transitional demands, either as isolated trade union demands or as part of a programme for reforming the institutions of the capitalist state (Ernest Mandel of the USFI put them forward in the 1960s as a series of "structural reforms").

Others like the British "Militant" group advance them as a trick - "fight for these demands now" is what they shout; "and later we'll reveal that they're directed against capitalism" is what they whisper amongst themselves. Both views lead inevitably to opportunism. Trotsky himself was clear that Transitional Demands were neither reforms nor tricks, not one of our demands will be realised under capitalism. That is why we are calling them transitional demands.

It creates a bridge to the mentality of the workers and then a material bridge to the socialist revolution. The whole question is how to mobilise the masses for struggle...The revolutionaries always consider that the reforms and acquisitions are only a by-product of revolutionary struggle. If we say that we will only demand what they can give, the ruling class will only give one tenth or more of what we demand.

When we demand more and can improve our demands, the capitalists are compelled to give the maximum. The more extended and militant the spirit of the workers, the more is demanded and won. They are not sterile slogans; they are a means of pressure on the bourgeoisie, and will give the greatest possible material results immediately". 11

Thus they are both a means of winning real concessions and a means of mobilising the masses on the basis of their own needs against capitalism in a struggle that can easily turn into a struggle for power.

Of course the use of the Transitional Programme and its demands inevitably varies in different circumstances. The emphasis on particular demands, the refocusing of the programme itself, will depend on the state of the class struggle, the state of the economy, the state of political life and so on. But what remains valid, in periods of boom as well as crisis, periods of retreat as well as of advance, in backward countries and in advanced ones, is precisely the method lodged within the Transitional Programme - that the goal of revolutionaries is to take workers across the "transitional bridge" from their present situation to the socialist revolution. All of these features were embodied within the Transitional Programme. This programme was not the invention of Trotsky. In his words: "It is the summation of the collective work up until today".¹²

After Trotsky's murder in 1940, preceded by the Stalinists' extermination of his closest collaborators (his son Sedov, Rudolf Klement, Erwin Wolf etc), and the desertion of leading members of the International (Serge, Leonetti, Muste, Zeller, Fischer, Naville, Rous, Shachtman, etc), the central leadership of the FI effectively ceased to exist. The Trotskyists were responsible for acts of unparalleled heroism during the war, but as an international organisation the FI disintegrated.

This collapse, exacerbated by war-time dislocation, might be the fate of any revolutionary organisation without mass parties or state resources at its disposal. Initially the sections had the Transitional Programme and the FI's declarations on the war and other issues, as their basis for unity. However the sections soon began to diverge from these positions and from each other.

FOOTNOTES

1. M.Shachtman, Ten Years - History and Principles of the Left Opposition (New York,1974) p.5.
2. L Trotsky, Writings 1935-36 (New York,1977) p.159.
3. This will be referred to hereafter as The Transitional Programme. All references are to L Trotsky, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International (New York, 1977).
4. *ibid.*, p.152.
5. Jane Degras, The Communist International 1919-1943 (London,1971) Vol 1, p.250.
6. *ibid*, pp. 248-9 7. *ibid*, p 249 (our emphasis) 8. L Trotsky The Third International After Lenin (New York,1970), p.79.
9. Documents of the Fourth International 1933-1940 (New York,1973), p.161.
10. LTrotsky, The Transitional Programme, *op.cit.*, p.114.
11. LTrotsky, "The Political Backwardness of the American Workers" in *ibid.*, pp159-160.
12. L Trotsky, "Completing the Programme and Putting it to Work", in *ibid.*, p.112.

Part 2.

The epigones destroy Trotsky's International, 1940-1953

The general decimation of cadre before and during the war (including the loss of some 40 per cent of the SWP(US) in the split with the Shachtmanites) was paralleled by a series of opportunist and sectarian deviations that politically weakened the forces of Trotskyism. In the USA the SWP, led by Cannon, distorted Trotsky's proletarian military policy when faced with the actual entry of the US into the war in late 1941.

The SWP placed their entire emphasis on the tar-Heal compromise involved in this policy (acceptance of bourgeois militarisation programmes, but combined with a fight to place them under

workers' control), but obscured the strategic context that Trotsky always set this policy in - that is a clear and unambiguous struggle for the policy of revolutionary defeatism when confronted with the actuality of imperialist war. Using the pretext of the need to maintain its legality at all costs, Cannon delayed the party from issuing a statement on the war when it broke out.

Only under pressure from oppositionists, largely inspired by the Spanish-Mexican Trotskyist Grandizo Munis, did the SWP issue a statement. It was first published in the January 1942 issue of "Fourth International", the theoretical organ of the party. It was not published in the party's newspaper, "The Militant", despite the wider circulation of that paper. The statement was however unequivocally against the war and raised the banner of internationalism against the mad stampede towards the slaughter. However it did not spell out, at any point, that American Marxists regarded the defeat of the American bourgeoisie's armies as a lesser evil. It was an internationalist anti-war statement, but, not a Leninist defeatist statement.

The party went even further, suggesting on a number of occasions that fascism, and not the American "democratic" imperialists, was the American workers' main enemy. The Transitional Programme had laid down the guiding principles for the FI in the imperialist countries: "In this struggle the basic principle is 'the chief enemy is in your own country' or 'the defeat of your own (imperialist) government is the lesser evil". 13

The FI's Manifesto on War had stated in 1940: "The Fourth International builds its policy not on the military fortunes of the capitalist states but on the transformation of the imperialist war into a war of the workers against the capitalists".¹⁴ Indeed, Trotsky had had occasion earlier to denounce his Palestinian co-thinkers for deviating from this line.

The SWP, in the heat of war and with prosecutions looming, retreated from the Frs positions. In "Socialism on Trial" Cannon refused to make clear, in a mass sale pamphlet, that the main enemy was at home: "Q. Is it true that the party is as equally opposed to Hitler as it is to the capitalist claims of the United States?

A. That is unanswerable. We consider Hitler and Hitlerism the greatest enemy of mankind. We want to wipe it off the face of the earth. The reason we do not support a declaration of war by American arms is because we do not believe the American capitalists can defeat Hitler and fascism. We think Hitlerism can be destroyed only by conducting a war under the leadership of the workers".¹⁵ There are three centrist waverings in this short exchange: 1) Hitler, not the "Sixty families", becomes the US workers' greatest enemy;

2) Cannon proposes a war - presumably an invasion of Germany - as the way of defeating Hitler. Trotsky, on the other hand, rightly told the Palestinian group who proposed a similar war: "No, in this way we shall not help the German workers to rouse themselves from their stupor. We must show them in action that revolutionary politics consists in a simultaneous struggle against the respective imperialist governments in all the warring countries. This 'simultaneity' must not of course be taken mechanically...For Hitler and Mussolini the success of a socialist revolution in anyone of the advanced countries is infinitely more terrible than the combined armaments of all the imperialist 'democracies'.¹⁶

3) Cannon talks merely of the "leadership" of the workers. This is so vague as to be meaningless. We say, only when the government is our government, a real workers' government, will we "defend the fatherland". On that there can be no equivocation. Yet the SWP did equivocate. They transformed the revolutionary defeatist slogan of "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war" into the evasive democratic slogan: "The real solution is to transform the imperialist war into a war against fascism".¹⁷ This slogan was raised even before the entry of the US into the war.

The significance of this vacillation was that it reflected the SWP's tendency to submit to national pressures and considerations, allowing them to override internationalist ones. All of Cannon's justifications for his careful phraseology (in fact policy), are couched in terms of reaching out to the consciousness of the "American workers" - as it currently existed. This, in itself correct and commendable desire, was not combined with a recognition of the need for the SWP to i) stand

against that consciousness which was in the first phase of the war, chauvinist, ii) to fulfil its internationalist duty as the strongest party of the Trotskyist movement, operating in the best conditions, to speak out to the world working class in clear revolutionary defeatist terms.

While the SWP members in the merchant navy and armed forces made courageous efforts to establish international contacts, the party did not act as an international organising centre for the FI. Nor did it establish such a centre in a neutral European country to liaise with the fragmented European sections. Such a project, though difficult, was not impossible.

As it turned out, the Europeans themselves were able to re-establish contact in 1943, when they held international gatherings in countries occupied by the Nazis. An international centre, in Switzerland for example, would have made this process of regroupment less difficult. The SWP did not act decisively to arrest the organisational dislocation caused by the war. Had they done so some of its ill-effects might have been offset. The SWP further abdicated its responsibilities as leading section of the world movement (which despite its being legally debarred from actual membership of the FI it nevertheless was) when, after the war it willingly ceded leadership to the young and inexperienced Europeans - Pablo and Germain (now Mandel).

As well as the errors of the SWP, the wartime history of the FI saw a number of other sections veer away from a consistent revolutionary line on the war. In France there existed no official section of the FI at the beginning of the war.

Former members of the POI (official section - dissolved by the International Executive Committee in June 1939), grouped under the name of "the French Committees for the Fourth International", adopted social-patriotic positions and nationalist demands faced with the German occupation of France. They saw the national struggle of a section of their own imperialist bourgeoisie as progressive. These concessions by the POI to the nationalism of the 'petty-bourgeoisie were particularly significant in that, at the beginning of the war, the French proletariat had not yet been infected with the "anti-boche" chauvinist poison that the PCF was later to propagate.

The other main group was the CCI (which stemmed mainly from Molinier/Frank's pre-war PC!). This group, while holding fast against the tide of petit-bourgeois nationalism and refusing to support the struggle of the Gaullist section of the French bourgeoisie, fell into abstract propagandism and a sectarian attitude towards those struggles by French workers and peasants which brought them into confrontation with the armed forces of German imperialism.

In France, a Provisional European Secretariat of the FI was set up under Pablo's leadership in 1943. In February 1944 it organised a conference of European sections. One of the aims this conference gave itself was to secure the unification of the two main French groups. The Conference criticised the nationalist deviation of the POI; but accepted the false contention of the POI that it had been infected by the nationalism of the masses at the start of the war. Furthermore, the Conference also criticised what it saw as the sectarian attitude of the CCI towards the partisan movement in such a way that they implied that the CCI's sectarianism was on a par with the nationalist opportunism of the POI. (Indeed centrists such as Mandel still today argue that the principal mistake was not to have fully participated in the Gaullist/Stalinist-led military resistance movements against German imperialism).

There was no attempt to search for the real roots of the CCI's sectarianism. In a desire to achieve unification, no mention was made, for example, of the CCI's incorrect perspectives and its confusion over the relationship between party and class. Its attempt to set up "workers' groups" as embryonic soviets was similar to Molinier/Frank's centrist position, developed in 1936/36, of Revolutionary Action Groups as embryonic soviets (see Braun's "The Mass Paper" in "The Crisis of the French Section"). Therefore a complete and honest balance sheet of the war period was not drawn up in France.

The German section, the IKD, veered in a Menshevik direction, arguing that the victory of the Nazis had, once again, placed the "democratic revolution" on the agenda, as against the proletarian revolution.

In Britain the two Trotskyist groups committed similar errors. The Workers' International League (WIL), while it carried out good work in the factories, leading strikes etc, eventually fell in with the line advanced by Cannon. Prior to the fall of France, the WIL maintained a clear defeatist position. In December 1938, the WIL argued that the "only way to act is to show the German working class that we struggle against our own bosses and by example encourage them to overthrow Hitler".¹⁸ Indeed, foreshadowing the errors later to be committed by the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), the other Trotskyist group, the WIL adopted a sectarian approach to practical problems posed by the onset of war. They argued that demands for adequate air-raid shelters for workers was tantamount to aiding the war effort. However, after the fall of France in 1940, the line began to change. With the "enemy at the door", the WIL began to buckle before chauvinist pressure.

Defeat was no longer an abstract "lesser evil". It was a real possibility.

The WIL declared, in February 1941, that the task was "turning the present imperialist war into a real struggle of the workers against Nazism". The WIL linked this more explicitly than the SWP did, with a struggle against the British capitalists. However their slogan was not a consistently revolutionary defeatist one. The smaller official section of the FI, the RSL, maintained a harder defeatist position. However, like the CCI, they exhibited definite sectarian tendencies, particularly in their tactical application of this policy.

It would be wrong to give equal weight to sectarianism and opportunism in time of imperialist war. Lenin, during World War 1, was precisely prepared to bloc with sectarians (without endorsing their overall politics) in a bid to rally the most consistently internationalist forces.

We think the FI in its post-war fusions in Britain and France, was wrong to condemn the two errors as though they were of equal weight. The opportunist errors of the POI, the SWP and the WIL reflected the pressure of social chauvinism. Where the sectarian trend did not involve passive abstention from struggle (as it clearly did not in France), it was clearly superior. Also ominous was the failure of the FI or the SWP itself to draw up an honest balance sheet accounting for and correcting the SWP's war-time errors.

In 1944 several of the European sections of the FI regrouped at a conference held inside Nazi-occupied Europe. They adopted the "Theses on the Liquidation of World War 2 and the Revolutionary Upsurge".

These testified to the continuing revolutionary potential of the sections of the Fourth International. The theses, written at a time when anti German chauvinism and pro-allied sentiments were growing rapidly in Europe, espoused a defeatist position in the war. They indicated that the reconstruction of the FI on a revolutionary basis was a real possibility. However, severe disorientation over the crucial question of perspectives, obstructed this development from taking final shape.

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

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

As we have shown, the Transitional Programme was not a collection of timeless Marxist truisms, it was a "manual of action". As such it was necessary to constantly test its demands, tactics and perspectives against reality, and to develop the programme accordingly. The followers of Trotsky

repeatedly failed to do this after the war.

Trotsky's perspective at the beginning of the Second World War was that it would engender revolutionary upheavals as great as or greater than, those succeeding the First World War. Capitalist economy, bourgeois society and its reformist parasites would be thrown into mortal crisis.

Likewise, the Stalinist bureaucracy, if it survived a military debacle at the hands of the imperialist aggressor, would succumb to the political revolution of the proletariat aroused by revolutionary events in the west.

Criticisms can certainly be made of Trotsky's telescoped timetable for the historic exhaustion of US monopoly capitalism. However, this is an error Marx, Engels and Lenin made before him, and is a risk of error inseparable from revolutionary optimism.

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

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

Likewise in the Russian workers' state, planned economy proved stronger than the sabotage and bungling of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The isolated and defeated FI leaders could not face the fact that they were passing from an aborted revolutionary period (1944/5), to a counter-revolutionary period, albeit one of democratic counterrevolution in the principle imperialist countries, rather than bonapartist or fascist reaction. The majority of the old FI leaders simply shut their eyes and held on to "orthodoxy".

However the new European and then International leadership around Michel Pablo and Ernest Germain began to transform Trotsky's tactics, strategy and programme in a piecemeal and empirical fashion under the cover of an apparent fidelity to his revolutionary perspectives. To preserve these, "revolution" became a world objective process which chose here the Stalinist bureaucracy, there the Titoite partisans, elsewhere the Bevanite parliamentarians, as its agents for a whole historic stage. It was only a matter of time before this piecemeal revision was systematised. This Pablo attempted in 1950 - 1951.

The FI developed perspectives for after the war based on a combination of dogmatism and blind optimism. This dogmatism spawned a series of errors which oscillated between sectarianism and opportunism. In time the political vibrations broke up the FI into two factions both equally tainted with these errors. Despite the signs of economic boom in the USA, Cannon insisted that the American revolution was imminent. Furthermore the perspective of a third world war meant that the world tottered on the verge of a permanently pre revolutionary situation. The documents of the 1946 International Congress clearly reveal this tendency in the FI. Thus in "The New Imperialist Peace and the Building of Parties of the FI", they argued:

"The war has aggravated the disorganisation of capitalist economy and has destroyed the last possibilities of a relatively stable equilibrium in social and international relations".²¹ And again: "If the war did not immediately create in Europe a revolutionary upsurge of the scope and tempo we anticipated, it is nevertheless undeniable that it destroyed capitalist equilibrium on a world scale, thus opening up a long revolutionary period".²² This "long revolutionary period" became an ever-expanding one, and as such ceased to have any useful specific meaning.

The potential for rectifying these errors of perspective and of reconstructing the FI on a revolutionary basis existed within the forces of Trotskyism. There were challenges to the leadership's rigid adherence to Trotsky's perspectives. In the SWP, for example, Felix Morrow led an opposition that argued: "Trotsky tried to teach us to understand that it is necessary to make a prognosis but equally necessary to understand that it is impossible to guess the tempos in advance for a prolonged period, and hence one must introduce the necessary correctives into it in the course of experience".²³ Similarly the British RCP (a product of a 1944 fusion between the RSL and the WIL) argued against the "New Imperialist Peace" document, that Stalinism had been strengthened and not thrown into mortal crisis. It pointed to the danger of disorientation that the failure to recognise this could lead to. The SWP contended in 1946 that the war was still on. The FI hesitated before calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from occupied territories. Initially, it rejected a British amendment to this effect, though it later corrected its position. The French section argued that the USSR, in 1946, was more threatened than at the darkest hour of the war. Perhaps more astonishing was the answer the Trotskyist "Neuer Spartakus" gave to the question: "Why does

Stalin rob? Because he lost the war".²⁴

Also on the question of the immediacy of imperialism's own economic crisis, the RCP contended "But in a resolution that seeks to orientate our own cadres on immediate economic perspectives - from which the next stage of the class struggle will largely flow, and thus our immediate propaganda and tactics - the perspective is clearly false... For the second time in a generation capitalism has been enabled to gain a breathing space. The theory of spontaneous collapse of capitalism is entirely alien to Bolshevism".²⁵

Both the Morrow and RCP oppositions made correct criticisms of the FI's line. Neither matured into a Left Opposition, however. This fact is decisive in understanding why later errors were able to go by unchecked. The Morrow opposition drew from its conclusions that a return to the democratic - as opposed to the transitional - programme was necessary in Europe. Further their hostility to the Stalinist counterrevolutionary occupation of Eastern Europe, catapulted them into adopting "New Class" theories and abandoning defencism altogether.

The SWP's leadership's insistence that the entry of Soviet troops saw the commencement of a classical dual power situation did little to offset Morrow's "New Class" tendencies. The end result was that this tendency drifted out of the SWP and into the renegade Shachtman group.

The fate of the RCP was different. As a result of its criticisms of the FI's perspectives and its refusal to accept the "deep entry" policy into the Labour Party that the International Secretariat favoured, it incurred the enmity of Pablo and Germain. Cannon and the SWP had their own grudge against the Haston/Grant leadership of the RCP dating from the fusion negotiations before the war. Against this leadership the SWP and the IS sponsored a faction, led by Gerry Healy and John Lawrence, who split in 1947 to carry out the deep entry perspective. This effectively wrecked the RCP, weakening and demoralising the old leadership and strengthening the Healy group. With Cannon and Pablo's blessing the two wings were re-united in 1949, but with the old Minority being given a majority on the leading committees. With a vigour that was later to become his trademark, Healy set about expelling his former opponents and turned the RCP, now called "The Club", into a Pablo/Cannon loyal section.

Thus, the critics of the 1946/8 period were removed from the FI by the time it was thrown into a new crisis of perspectives in the early 1950s. In 1951, no force existed which was able to argue for the correction of earlier errors as the basis for avoiding new ones.

Under the leadership of Pablo, and with the approval of Cannon and the SWP, the Second World Congress of the FI in 1948, systematised its erroneous perspectives and tentatively suggested that the imminent world war would be transformed into an "international civil war"²⁶. This perspective, put forward as a possibility that did not rule out "other important factors in the political developments in other countries"²⁷, was later turned into the over-riding perspective of the FI by Pablo. He used the false positions of the FI to suggest that a war between imperialism and the USSR was imminent and inevitable.

Thus the perspectives document of 1948, which had been used as a justification for a mass party building turn by the FI, later became a tool in Pablo's hands when he developed the perspective of liquidating Trotskyist factions into social democratic and Stalinist parties. This later abuse of the earlier perspective was absolutely connected to its essential falseness. The optimism about the likely spontaneous transformation of a war into a civil war embodied a key methodological error committed by the post-War FI. Trotsky's perspectives and prognoses were turned into a prophecy that had to come true in the short term. The collapse of capitalism and the eruption of a revolutionary tide were designated as the inevitable outcomes of an unfolding objective process to which Trotskyists had to relate.

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

The FI did not lead the working class in any country in 1948.

Furthermore, the revolutionary or pre-revolutionary crises of the immediately post-war period were clearly over. Yet the FI held to its perspectives. At the 1948 FI Congress, the Theses on Stalinism did not describe the events in Eastern Europe (including Yugoslavia) as part of any revolutionary process. This retention of the earlier perspectives was what allowed the FI to maintain its orthodox political standpoint.

As such we stand by the programmatic declarations of the 1948 Congress as well as of the 1938 Congress. However, as the FI leadership's world view became increasingly at variance with reality, so their orthodoxy became ever more fragile. All that was needed to dislodge the F. from the orthodox positions it held until 19-48 was a sharp twist in world events.

That twist in events came almost immediately after the 1948 Congress. In the summer of 1948 the Tito-Stalin split was made public.

The Yugoslavian Communist Party (YCP) was expelled from the Cominform and was denounced as, variously, "Trotskyist" and "Fascist".

Out of the Yugoslav events the FI developed centrist conclusions and positions. They saw in them only a confirmation of their wrong perspectives. Thus, according to the FI leadership, Yugoslavia demonstrated the crisis of Stalinism that they had been predicting since 1944.

Further the whole development was a part of the successful revolutionary upsurge that had always been a key component of their perspectives. The partisan war was now described, post facto, as a "proletarian revolution" (initially only by Pablo, but, by 1951, by the whole of the FI leadership). The state established by that "revolution" was a workers' state which was seen to be suffering from merely quantitative deformations, it was not seen as a qualitatively degenerate workers' state. Tito's parasitic bureaucracy was, correspondingly, not a counterrevolutionary factor but a "Leninist" friend who needed the FIs advice - not its revolutionary opposition. The Open Letter from the International Secretariat requesting attendance rights at the YCP Congress of July 1948 declared 'We understand exactly the tremendous responsibility weighing upon you, and we consider it our

Michel Pablo, the leader of the FI at the time, used the Yugoslav affair to attack a number of key positions of the Trotskyist movement; on Stalinism, on the revolutionary party, the nature of revolutions and on the tactic of entryism and, through a distortion of this tactic, he attacked the communist premises of the united front tactic. Further, he argued that the process occurring in Yugoslavia (which was genuinely revolutionary according to him), would also take place in the rest of the Eastern European "buffer zone" as well; indeed, he already saw it taking place in China.²⁹

Pablo's positions on Yugoslavia were adopted by the FI at its Third World Congress in 1951. They were subscribed to by all the major Sections and leading figures of the FI. There was no revolutionary opposition to Pablo's centrist position that "In Yugoslavia, the first country where the proletariat took power since the degeneration of the USSR, Stalinism no longer exists today as an effective factor in the workers' movement which, however, does not exclude its possible re-emergence under certain conditions".³⁰

Essential to Pablo's position was a revision of the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism, i.e. that it is invariably a counterrevolutionary force. This does not mean that Stalinism can never carry out progressive measures, even up to the transformation of property relations. What it does mean is that always, under all conditions, the Stalinists will obstruct the working class from taking political power directly into its own hands and using that power in its own class interests. In place of this appraisal of Stalinism, Pablo argued in his Report to the 1951 Congress that "We have made clear that the CP's are not exactly reformist parties and that under certain exceptional conditions they possess the possibility of projecting a revolutionary orientation".³¹

Pablo combined this revision with an attack on Lenin's theory of imperialism as the epoch of wars and revolutions. He replaced this with a formula that was ridiculous both as an immediate perspective and as a description of a defining feature of the epoch: "In their stead, it is the conception of Revolution-War, of War-Revolution which is emerging and upon which the

perspectives and orientation of revolutionary Marxists in our epoch should rest". 32

Using this theoretical "rearmament" (i.e. revision) as his pretext, Pablo embarked upon a tactical course which involved the complete liquidation of the Trotskyist programme. This liquidation was necessitated by the organisational and political concessions that were involved in Pablo's "entrism sui generis" ("entryism of a special type", based on long-term entry and the hiding of the revolutionary programme). Pablo argued that the imminent War-Revolution left no time to build Trotskyist parties, but that this was no longer a crucial problem because in the coming period a variety of political formations could embark on the struggle for power. The Stalinists, for example, could be forced as parties to project a revolutionary orientation. Entryism was needed in order to generate the necessary pressure. In other formations, such as social democracy or petty bourgeois nationalism, the perspective was one of centrist splits away from the parties. Here entryism was necessary in order to prepare and develop such a split. In both cases the entryism that was to be undertaken was not that advocated by Trotsky, around the time of the "French Turn", that is entryism conceived of as a united front tactic to win leftward moving workers to the communist programme, a tactic that could not be a long-term one. The entryism "of a special type" had to be deep and long term, the open fight for the revolutionary programme had to be "temporarily" abandoned.³³

This thorough-going opportunism propelled the FI along a sharp rightward-moving centrist course. In 1951, Pablo characterised the Peronist movement in Argentina as "anti-capitalist". The Chinese Communist Party soon became, like the YCP, a revolutionary factor.

In Britain, the left reformist Aneurin Bevan became a "left centrist". In 1952, Pablo instructed the French section to make a deep entry into the PCF, to integrate itself into the working class movement "as it was".

Such concessions inevitably entailed the abandonment of any fight for principled politics against the leaderships of the parties or movements into which the Trotskyists entered.

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

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

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

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

Despite acceptance of the 1948/51 revisionism, the IC was able, on occasion, to make isolated but valid criticisms of the IS. However, such criticisms, born out of both factional point-scoring and

revulsion at IS betrayals, only occasionally went beyond a sterile defence of what they called "orthodoxy". In reality this was a revisionist melange of catastrophism, Stalinophobia and softness on social democracy - a mixture that Cannon, Bleibtreu-Favre and then Lambert and Healy had long pioneered. An examination of each of these groups' record before and during the split proves this conclusively.³⁴

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

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

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

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

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

The real cause was, in fact, an organisational one. The SWP turned against Pablo only as a result of his "interference" in the SWP (via the Cochran-Clarke faction). True to their national-isolationist tradition (revealed previously during the war) the SWP leaders refused to be treated as a "branch office" of the FI; that is, they refused to undertake a tactical decision that had been agreed by the majority of the leadership of the FI at an International Executive Committee meeting. The breaking point came when Pablo supported the Cochran Clarke faction. The SWP leaders discovered a number of political disagreements and went straight for a split. Prior to this Cannon had believed that his previous support for Pablo would ensure that the SWP would not be subjected to IS discipline. That discipline had been alright for the PCI in France, but not for the SWP. He declared in May 1953:

"But what if Pablo and the IS should come out in support of the minority. If such a thing could occur - and I'm not saying it will; I'm just assuming that the absolutely incredible arrogance of the Cochranites is based on some rumour that they are going to have the support of the IS - if that should occur, it would not oblige us to change our minds about anything. We wouldn't do so".⁴⁰

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

retreat (true). Both were intent on liquidating the party (true). All of these failures were important and Cannon was right to point to them. But he was wrong to conclude that these factors contained the essence of the problem. and by extension the essence of “Pabloism” . For when it became clear that Pablo had not liquidated - Le. organisationally dissolved - the FI, the road back to the Pablo-led IS was again open.

The essence of Pablo’s politics was to be located in his programmatic premises first, his tactical conclusions second, and his organisational methods last. On the SWP’s part, therefore, the split stemmed from national considerations and centred for the most part on organisational questions. It was not a definitive, principled political split, despite Cannon’s oaths to the contrary.

With the Healy group in Britain the American pattern was followed almost exactly. The lack of serious political differences on the issues at stake was reflected in more than just the fact that Healy, like Pablo, had a portrait of Tito in his office! Healy himself had been Cannon’s man in the RCP from 1944/7. He worked closely with Pablo to destroy the Haston Grant leadership - a process urgently speeded up after Haston had expressed criticisms of the softness shown by Pablo towards Tito. In particular, Healy could make no “root and branch” criticism of “entryism sui generis” since he and Lawrence had actually pioneered this from 1947 onwards.

This “tactic” flowed from a “perspective” which foresaw the evolution to centrism of the left reformist leaders. Behind them a mass movement would be created which would force the removal of the right-reformist leaders. The task of Trotskyists in all this was to amalgamate with the left and assist in this development. To do this required the public abandonment of the Transitional Programme, the FI and the revolutionary party, and it meant not producing a specifically revolutionary propaganda organ. In their place there was to be a highly secret faction and a public left-centrist grouping publishing a newspaper which would express the politics appropriate to such a formation. This policy was put into practice by Healy after the collapse of the RCP.

The British section was turned into “The Club”, a secret Trotskyist grouping. The broader, public grouping known as the Socialist Fellowship included Labour MPs and union bureaucrats, gathered around the newspaper “Socialist Outlook”.

Pablo approved of this tactic and embodied its experience in his “entryism sui generis” which applied to Stalinist parties as well as to social democrats.⁴¹

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

When one comes to look at the Healyites’ own account of their split with Pabloism, the political questions are less than clear.⁴²

The dispute arose when Lawrence (like Clarke in America) became a direct agent for Pablo and challenged Healy’s leadership. Over the Korean war he pushed a pro-Stalinist position on the Editorial Board of “Socialist Outlook”, in alliance with the “centrists” (Healy’s term for left reformists). This breach of discipline and its consequences form the substance of “The Struggle in the British Section”.⁴³

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

However, the political differences underlying the split were real enough. With the advent of the Korean war in 1950, Pablo saw the realisation of his “war-revolution” perspective as imminent. The British section made sure that Socialist Outlook followed the Pablo line, with a number of pro-Stalinist articles appearing. Healy and Lawrence coexisted peacefully at this time. However, after the tactical turn towards entryism into Stalinist parties in 1952, Pablo, having succeeded in

wrecking the French section, began to foist his tactic on other sections. By 1953, Lawrence, in cahoots with Pablo, was pushing for a much more definite pro-Stalinist orientation in Britain. Healy's longstanding' and long term orientation to the Bevanites conflicted with this tactical turn. Fearing a Pabloite victory, Healy threw in his lot with Cannon, who feared similar moves in the US. He moved against Lawrence in Britain and, eventually, Pablo internationally.

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

In June 1951 the PCI leader .Bleibtreu-Favre, supported by Pierre Lambert and the majority of the organisation, produced a response to Pablo's revisionist document "Where are we going?". The French document "Where is Comrade Pablo going? " was delayed in its publication by Germain (Ernest Mandel).44, 45

He had duplicitously pretended to oppose Pablo on "democratic" grounds, but warned Bleibtreu-Favre against provoking Pablo into taking disciplinary measures by putting out the document. Because Bleibtreu-Favre, Lambert and the others supported Germain's document "What should be modified and what should be maintained in the Theses of the Second World Congress of the Fourth International on the Question of Stalinism? " (the famous "Ten Theses")46, the French accepted his advice. The result was that Pablo, in collaboration with Germain, built up a Pabloite minority faction around Michel Mestre.

Pablo effectively isolated the French majority after refusing to circulate Bleibtreu-Favre's document before the Third World Congress.

The French were left declaring their support for the "Ten Theses", which were not voted on at the Congress. In January 1952, Pablo proposed that the PCI should carry out an "entryism sui generis" tactic in the PCF - then in a leftist phase. The French majority, preferring an orientation to the looser SFIO, opposed this turn on tactical grounds.

After a struggle, in June 1952, Pablo, Germain and Healy (with Cannon's approval) expelled the majority of the French Central Committee!

However much we would sympathise with the PCI as a victim of bureaucratic methods, their struggle was, in the end, a vacillating, politically incorrect one. First, by supporting what we have described elsewhere as Mandel's "Orthodox Revisionism,4 ~ Finding the idea that Stalinist parties had led what the FI regarded as healthy revolutions to victory in Yugoslavia and China, unpalatable from an "orthodox" standpoint, Mandel revised the Trotskyist position on Stalinism.

It had a "dual character" - a good side and a bad side. The pressure of the masses could serve to allow the good side to win out. Thus: "The Yugoslav and Chinese examples have demonstrated that, placed in certain exceptional conditions, entire Communist Parties can modify their political line and lead the struggle of the masses up to the conquest of power, while passing beyond the objectives of the Kremlin, Under such conditions these parties cease to be Stalinist in the classical sense of the words" .48

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

Criticising Pablo's "objections", the French introduced their own.

China, they argued, proved that "The reality of the class struggle will prove more powerful than the Kremlin apparatus, despite the non existence of a revolutionary party" .49 The reason was because

the CPs were subordinated to the Kremlin. If they went against the Kremlin then they could not be Stalinist: "In any event it is absurd to speak of a Stalinist party in China, and still more absurd to foster belief in even the resemblance of a 'victory of Stalinism in China' ".50

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

In 1951 the centrist positions of the Third World Congress on Stalinism, on Yugoslavia, and general perspectives (the impending "civil war" perspective) proved, beyond doubt, that a programmatic collapse of the Fourth International had taken place. The fact that no section voted against the Yugoslav resolution - the cornerstone of all the errors - is a fact of enormous significance.

The FI as a whole had collapsed into centrism. From this point on, the task facing Trotskyists was the refoundation of a Leninist-Trotskyist International on the basis of a re-elaborated programme of revolutionary communism. Manoeuvres to replace the leadership of the FI were entirely insufficient. The programmatic basis of the FI had to be changed. The manner by which this could have been done in the early 1950s is a matter of tactical speculation. What is decisive for us is that it was not done. The historical continuity of Trotskyism was shattered - as was evidenced by Pablo's use of the Congress documents at the Tenth Plenum of the International Executive Committee in February 1952, to usher in "entrism sui generis". The opposition in America, Britain and France that did emerge in 1952-3 was subjectively committed to opposing Pablo. However, they have to be judged not by their impulse but by their politics. Their "orthodoxy" was both sterile and based on post-war revisionism, prompted by the Yugoslav events. It was not authentic Trotskyism.

Thus we cannot view either component of the 1953 split as the "continuators" of Trotskyism. Both were centrist.

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

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

Disorientation after the war led to a programmatic collapse of the FI. After the CI's programmatic collapse, Trotsky's Left Opposition maintained a reform perspective because the CI contained within it a mass movement. After the FI's programmatic collapse, and the failure of an Opposition to materialise, the FI was left without a programme and had never contained a mass vanguard within it.

The FI, unlike the CI, was in an essential sense its programme. That is why we say that after 1951, whatever the tactics that may have been employed, authentic Trotskyists had to elaborate a new programme and thus build the International anew.

FOOTNOTES

13. L Trotsky, *ibid*, p.13!

14. L Trotsky, *Writings 1939-40* (New York, 1973), p.222.

15. J. Cannon, *Socialism on Trial* (New York, 1973), p.52. (Our emphasis).

16. L Trotsky, *Writings 1938-39* (New York, 1974) p.213.

17. *Militant* (New York, 15th March 1941).

18. *Workers International News* (December 1938) 19. *Youth for Socialism* (February 1941).

20. L Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International* (New York, 1972) Vol1.. p: 179.

21. Fourth International (New York, June 1946), p.169.
22. *ibid.*, p. 175.
23. Felix Morrow, "International Report (Minority Report)" in SWP Internal Bulletin Vol III No.8 (1945), p.32.
24. All examples given are quoted from RCP Conference Documents (September 1946), pp. 6-7.
25. *ibid.*, p. 10.
26. Fourth International (New York, June 1948), p.101.
27. *ibid.*
28. Fourth International (New York, August 1948), p.181.
29. see M. Pablo, "The Yugoslav Affair", in Fourth International (New York, December 1948) 30. Class, Party and State in the Eastern European Revolution (New York, 1969) p.57.
31. Fourth International (New York, November/December 1951) (original emphasis).
32. M. Pablo, "Where Are We Going?" in International Secretariat Documents 1951-1954 (New York, 1974) Vol1. p. 7 (original emphasis).
33. See the advice to the Austrian section "not to push forward programmatic and principled questions" (International Information Bulletin, New York, December 1951).
34. Theories abound as to whether Bleibtreu-Favre (or Favre-Bleibtreu - the name has been printed both ways) was one or two people. Further, it seems that Favre is a pen-name of Pierre Lambert. We do not know the truth behind this mystery. Nor do we care - the politics pioneered by Bleibtreu-Favre provided the '(incorrect) basis for the Lambert group.
35. Fourth International (New York, October 1949), p.259.
36. "Letter from James. P. Cannon to Daniel Renard", May 29th 1952, in International Committee Documents 1951-54 (New York 1974), Vol1. p.23.
37. "A Letter to Trotskyists Throughout the World" in *ibid.*, Vol 3. p 152.
38. *ibid.*, pp. 138-152, 39. *ibid.*, p. 139.
40. J.Cannon, Speeches to the Party (New York, 1973) p. 89.
41. For a more detailed treatment of this period, see Workers Power 7,39 and 40.
42. Trotskyism versus Revisionism (London 1974-5) Six volumes.
43. *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp 72-84.
44. See footnote 34.
45. International Committee Documents 1951-54 (New York, 1974) Vol. 1. pp.9-20.
46. International Secretariat Documents 1951-54 (New York,1974), Vol. 1, pp 16-24.
47. See Workers Power & Irish Workers Group The Degenerated Revolution (London,1982), pp.90-93.
48. International Secretariat Documents 1951-54 (New York, 1974) Vol. 1, p.18.
49. International Committee Documents 1951-54 (New York, 1974) Vol. 1.,p.16.
50. *ibid.*, p. 16

Part 3.

The degenerate fragments of the Fourth International, 1953 -1963

The principal tendencies that emerged from the 1953 split failed either then or subsequently to raise themselves out of the centrism into which the FI as a whole had sunk. Neither the international Committee nor the International Secretariat, nor any of the tendencies claiming continuity with them, have proved capable of regenerating a democratic centralist international based upon a transitional programme reelaborated to encompass the new circumstances and tasks of the last thirty years.

The Pablo-led IS had given definitive proof of its centrism during the events in Bolivia in 1951-2. In this country the FI had an organisation that enjoyed mass influence - the POR, led by Guillermo Lora.

The POR's positions and the IS' attitude to these positions indicated that the revision of the Trotskyist programme had been a question of deeds and not merely a theoretical question in the period leading up to the Third World Congress in 1951. Pablo, in his report to the 1951 congress stated that: ".....the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist mass movement often assumes confused forms, under a petty bourgeois leadership as with APRA in Peru, with the MNR in Bolivia." 51

This description of the MNR, which was undoubtedly a bourgeois party, gave the seal of approval to the POR's conciliatory attitude to this movement, particularly when it assumed government. In the crucial test of revolution the POR failed to advance an independent communist programme.

The revolution in Bolivia on April 9th 1951 brought to power the bourgeois nationalist MNR, under Pal Estensorro. This capitalist government presided over a situation approaching dual power. Its position was highly unstable. Increasingly the question of class power was being posed. A determined revolutionary policy could have won the masses from the MNR, in whom they had illusions, to the Trotskyists.

The POR chose a different line of advance however the MNR government was not characterised clearly as a bourgeois obstacle to a genuine revolutionary workers' and peasants' government. Lora offered the following alternative view: "Today, far from succumbing to the hysteria of a struggle against the MNR, whom the pro-imperialists have described as 'fascists' we are marching with the masses to make the April 9th movement the prelude to the triumph of the workers' and peasants' government. "

It was for this reason that the POR raised as a central slogan: "Restoration of the constitution of the country through the formation of an MNR government which obtained a majority in the 1951 elections".⁵³ By this method the POR claimed to facilitate a "differentiation" within the MNR mass base, between revolutionary and reactionary elements. In fact it capitulated to the illusions of the masses in the MNR. It led to disastrous tactical conclusions. Lora put forward the demand for "worker ministers" from the COB (Bolivian Trade Union Central) to be admitted to the capitalist government. The POR did not call for a workers' and peasants' government based on soviets and a militia.

They did not demand that the COB leaders break with the bourgeoisie and take the road of struggle against it and the MNR government. Instead the POR posed a workers' and peasants' government as a future "natural emanation" from the left wing of the MNR and the workers' organisation, which would follow the "prelude" (in other words, stage) of an MNR government.

Instead of combining opposition to, and non-confidence in, the MNR government with independent support for its progressive measures and military defence of it against imperialism and domestic reaction, the POR gave it "critical support": "The POR began by justifiably granting critical support to the MNR government." 54 This formulation can only mean political support for the government, not simply critical support for its actions.

The POR's justification for giving a bourgeois government a form of political support and not just defence against reaction (an important distinction as Lenin showed in relation to the Kerensky government during the Kornilov coup) was the supposed "exceptional" nature of Bolivia and its revolution. The government was a petit- bourgeois government (defending whose class interests?). In addition it was declared to be an example of "Bonapartism sui generis". This latter neologism was quite in keeping with Pablo's method vis-a-vis "entrism sui generis." Lora's view of Bonapartism sui generis was that it rested on the proletariat against imperialism - and vice versa. This happy duality meant that one could support it insofar as it struggled against domestic reaction and imperialism. This was, in essence, the same policy that Stalin and Kamenev applied towards the Provisional Government in Russia before the appearance of Lenin's April Theses, and that Stalin applied in China in 1926.

The POR operated throughout 1951-2 under the slogan "For total control of the Cabinet by the Left". Even in 1953 Lora still referred to the Pal Estensorro government as "the transitional government of the Bolivian revolution." 55 In 1954 the majority of the POR followed the logic of the organisation's position, broke from it and joined the MNR.

Neither the IS nor the IC carried out any serious analysis or drew up any balance sheet of these events, so rich in experience and mistakes.

Their silence at the time and since can only be interpreted as approval of the POR's line. Thus the international leaderships, like the POR itself, failed the test of revolution. For its part the POR, dislocated from the FI after the revolutionary events, was abandoned to its fate.

Lora remained without international links until the late 1960s and played no role in the 1953 split. Under these conditions the POR developed a Bolivian-centred "national Trotskyist" outlook.

The Pablo-Mandel IS consistently failed to raise Trotsky's programme of political revolution in the repeated crises and upheavals that wracked Stalinism in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. In the early '50s, it held out hopes for a process of reform led by Tito-ite tendencies from within the bureaucracy. Consequently it failed to advance the political revolutionary programme at the time of the East German workers' rising of 1953.

Although the document, "Rise, Decline and Perspectives for the Fall of Stalinism" passed at the "Fourth World Congress" in 1954 did contain certain "orthodox" statements (as a result of amendments from the LSSP) with regard to the necessity of political revolution, it is nevertheless based upon a shallow optimistic fatalism: "What is entirely new in the situation is that we have reached the stage, forecast in the transitional programme, where the 'laws of history' reveal themselves as 'stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus'.

Of the two forces determining the orientation of the masses - the death agony of capitalism which unleashes immense revolutionary forces on a world scale and the policy of the reformist and Stalinist bureaucratic apparatuses, which play the role of a brake upon the masses - it is the first which is coming more and more to the fore." 56

The "Soviet bureaucracy" it is stated, "is no longer capable of smashing and arresting" this "revolutionary tide." The suggestion that Trotsky believed that at some future stage "objective processes" would of themselves resolve the balance of forces between the proletariat, imperialism and Stalinism is a complete travesty of his position. What Trotsky did see was that the objective conditions of capitalist decay and crisis together with the treacherous and self defeating policies of Stalinism and social democracy, created a "crisis of leadership".

Because the "revolutionary will of the proletariat" cannot, historically, be obliterated, despite the strength of the old apparatuses, then this crisis, "can be resolved only by the Fourth International". Trotsky's dialectical understanding of the relationship between objective and subjective factors in the class struggle was replaced in the Pablo-Mandel schema by an evolutionary optimism which was more akin to the method of Kautsky - but so much the more false and ridiculous in that it came fifty years post festum. This method derived directly from the false analyses of the post-war bureaucratic revolutions.

The International Secretariat applied exactly the same method to the crisis of Stalinism in the 1950s. Furthermore "splitting from the Kremlin" a la Tito, was identified as tantamount to a movement from counter-revolutionary Stalinism to mere "centrism" or "opportunism". Thus, from the starting point that the Yugoslav and Chinese CPs had "led victorious revolutions" and "in these instances ceased to be Stalinist parties in the proper meaning of the term" the inescapable conclusion was drawn that "since both the CCP and to a certain extent the YCP are in reality bureaucratic centrist parties which, however, still find themselves under pressure of the revolution in their countries, we do not call upon the proletariat of these countries to constitute new revolutionary parties or to prepare a political revolution in these countries." 58

Even in the Russian and East European states a strategy of entrisism in the state parties was

advocated. The programme of political revolution was reduced to eight "democratic" demands entirely devoid of any tactical or strategic orientation. Whilst de-Stalinisation and the "New Course" were seen as having positive effects in that they promoted differentiation and were a motor of change, no attention was paid to the strategy and tactics of political revolution, the tasks posed by the overthrow of the bureaucracy. The role and function of soviets, the general strike, the arming of the working class, the struggle against restorationist forces - none of these are even mentioned.

The proposed programme of reforms was intended to be palatable to the ever hoped for "centrist" section of the bureaucracy:

- "1. Freedom for working class prisoners.
2. Abolition of repressive anti-labour legislation.
3. Democratisation of the workers parties and organisations.
4. Legalisation of the workers parties and organisations.
5. Election and democratic functioning of mass committees.
6. Independence of the trade unions in relation to the government.
7. Democratic elaboration of the economic plan by the masses for the . masses.
8. Effective right of self-determination for the peoples." 59

This programme fails to link any of these demands to the struggle to overthrow the bureaucracy and establish proletarian power. Indeed, a strategy for this goal is not raised, precisely because of the IS's view of the bureaucracy as containing potential centrists within it.

Between 1954 and the Fifth World Congress in 1957, further enormous upheavals occurred in the degenerate workers' states and the USSR.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU "Secret Speech" by Khrushchev and the ensuing concessions, the revolutionary uprisings against the bureaucracy in Hungary and Poland - all in 1956 - made a deep impression on the IS leadership. Mandel gave the report to the Congress on the crisis within Stalinism. The reactions of the YCP and the CCP to the Hungarian events, while admitted to be uneven, were held to be progressive, confirming the reform perspective.

Whilst the revolutionary upsurge in Hungary produced an apparent move to the left by the IS leaders - i.e. they openly supported it, they accompanied this with a full-scale and explicit revision of the programme of political revolution. For Mandel and the IS leadership the Hungarian and Polish events had proven that a wing of the bureaucracy would follow the Tito-Mao road: in Hungary-Nagy, in Poland - Gomulka. Even in the USSR the "centrist" faction of Khrushchev was crowded on its left by Malenkov and Mikoyan, who, whilst not of the Nagy/Gomulka mould, presaged the emergence of such a tendency. In a bid to facilitate such tendencies in the bureaucracy, the programme of the political revolution for Eastern Europe and the USSR was completely revised.

Since the prospect of political revolution was seen to depend upon a section or wing of the bureaucracy, soviets could not be posed as organs of struggle against the whole bureaucracy. Political revolution was considered as (i.e. replaced by) peaceful competition between an "FI faction" and the rest of the bureaucracy for the leadership of the working class.

From this point onwards the notion of workers' councils or soviets as revolutionary organs of struggle is lost and replaced by the conception of soviets merely as organs of administration, for bringing the disembodied "world, revolution" masses into political life, and to ensure that the plan is agreed in a democratic forum.

The political revolution is thus reduced to a peaceful withering away of the bureaucratic caste. This programme of "political revolution" emerged from the Fifth Congress as a unified strategy for all workers' states. It was merely a question of the ease and rapidity with which the objective crisis within Stalinism would produce the necessary tendencies and splits within the bureaucratic castes. The later congresses of the IS and then the USFI merely repeated these formulae, adding nothing by way of programme.

The Leninist Comintern and Trotsky's Fourth International operated with an understanding of the

imperialist epoch as one of wars and revolutions, the epoch of the historic decline of capitalism. The Leninist CI clearly recognised the existence of revolutionary periods and pre-revolutionary situations as well as their opposites. The "world revolution" did not mean for the CI some disembodied objective process, it was the combination of the proletarian revolutions in the developed imperialist countries and the anti-imperialist upheavals of the colonies and semi-colonies.

Likewise Trotsky understood the "Permanent Revolution" as a strategy for the winning of working class power in the imperialised countries. The basis of this strategy was a programme and tactics to enable a party to lead the working class and the oppressed masses from the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic and national revolution to the proletarian and international revolution.

By contrast, in the Pablo-Mandel method the "World Revolution" was elevated into a "process", a demi-urge which was always advancing somewhere or in some form. In addition to the "World Revolution" this process was given equally spurious regional or pan-national character, for example the "Central American" revolution or the "Arab" revolution. This not only confused the "laws of history" with the strategic objectives for which the party had to organise the struggle but, in addition, it threw into the melting pot the democratic, anti-imperialist and proletarian goals. Consequently, instead of developing "perspectives" in which the tasks of revolutionaries were identified on the basis of scientific analysis, the Pablo-Mandel IS reduced "perspectives" to speculation, often highly fanciful, about what direction history would take next and, as a result, to which political formation they should next adapt themselves in order not to be left behind.

The "historical process" could now drive Stalinists, left social democrats, petit-bourgeois nationalists and anti-imperialists to act as the revolution's unconscious agents. It could force them, as its "blunt instrument", to follow a "roughly revolutionary" orientation. Accordingly the Pablo Mandel leadership turned the IS into a specialist at adapting to all such currents. The inconvenient shattered remains of Trotskyist groups in China, Vietnam and Cuba were ignored and even slandered, so that the IS could play the role of friendly critics to their Stalinist gaolers and executioners.

In the imperialist countries, "deep entry" or "entrism sui generis" survived several different "perspectives" which were supposed to justify it at particular times. First the post-war revolutionary crisis, then the impending "pre-World War 3" crisis were supposed to create a mass left-centrist current which could be helped to evolve towards Trotskyism by friendly criticism and organisational assistance. To ensure this, however, Trotskyists had to avoid frightening this current or isolating themselves from it. Hence it became urgently necessary to hide the Trotskyist programme. Whilst Pablo acted as advisor to the petit bourgeois nationalist FLN, Mandel edited the paper of the Belgian left reformists.

Both of necessity, acted as apologists for their respective employers. In the early 1960s the transitional demands of the programme were diluted into a series of "structural reforms" centred on a left reformist version of "workers control" (self-management or autogestion). Both the Leninist Party and the Trotskyist programme were liquidated. The policy of this period can only be characterised as right centrist. That IS to say it was at the level of practice indistinguishable from left reformism or petty bourgeois nationalism (in the metropolitan and colonial countries respectively). Yet the IS tendency (and later the USFI) was still centrist capable of swinging towards revolutionary positions under the external pressure of events. Under its existing leadership, however, the tendency was not capable of developing a stable leadership based on a re-elaborated revolutionary programme.

Both the Pablo-Mandel IS and, later, the Mandel USFI were capable of left and right zigzags; to the right from 1963-68, left from 1969-74 and then again to the right.

At the IS Fifth Congress (October 1957) a hardening of the position towards the Kremlin had taken place. This was a shift away from Pablo and towards Mandel, Frank and Maitan. The IS was now increasingly orienting itself towards the Algerian revolution and Pierre Frank's theses on the "Colonial Revolution" stressed the importance of the colonial world as the epicentre of world

revolution.

Two years later the Cuban Revolution solidly confirmed the IS\in its turn away from adaptation to reform currents within metropolitan Stalinism in favour of Third World guerrilla, nationalist movements. Frank pioneered the revision of "Permanent Revolution" into a semi-automatic process whereby, as a result of the weakness of the colonial bourgeoisie, a blunt instrument was enough to cut down Third World Capitalism. This coincided exactly with the response from Cannon and Hansen to the Cuban Revolution. It was this rapprochement which broke up the SWP – Healy/Lambert non-aggression pact within the IC. The SWP could not ignore developments in Cuba and they could only analyse the overturn of property relations there by using the method that had been used for Yugoslavia i.e. Pablo's method.

With both the IS and the SWP undertaking identical liquidationism with regard to Castro the only remaining block to unity was Pablo and his "personal regime" in the international. However Pablo was a waning force in the IS and was greatly weakened by the defection of his Latin American lieutenant, Posadas, in 1962. Pablo did not survive the 1963 re-unification, leaving the USFI the following year.

Whilst the SWP's adhesion to the United Secretariat marked the acceptance of all the fundamentals of "Pabloism", the IS dropped its attempts to impose 'any discipline on the SWP. Thus, the latter's view of "internationalism" prevailed in the new formation. The political basis of the USFI is well expressed in "The Dynamics of World Revolution Today" (1963). It centres on the Third World "epicentre"; it divides World Revolution into "great ethnographical zones" each with its own sub-revolution. Within these zones, Permanent Revolution becomes an automatic process whereby the anti-imperialist and democratic struggles are driven over into socialist struggles: "continual mass movements have drawn one backward country after another into the process of permanent revolution"⁶⁰.

The "strategy" and tactics that the USFI drew from this were characteristically chameleon-like. If in the Stalinist states they should take on the colouration of democratic reformers or "reform communists" and in Western Europe they were to take on the appearance of "centrist" social democrats or Stalinists then, in the colonial world, they became artificial petit-bourgeois populists. "The Dynamics of World Revolution Today" solemnly writes off the "industrial factory workers" as not the "main strength" of the proletariat, which is now seen as "miners, plantation hands, agricultural workers and the largely unemployed" ⁶¹.

It cheerfully "admits" that Marxist theory did not forecast the radical and decisive role of the peasantry, i.e. it accepts the Stalinist slander that Trotskyism "underestimates the peasantry". It remarks that peasants, living under tribal conditions, will, "remain an ally of the proletariat throughout the whole process of permanent revolution." ⁶² Again "The Dynamics of World Revolution Today" "asserts the possibility" of coming to power with a blunted instrument,⁶³. It is conceded that guerrilla warfare, on the basis of the Cuban model can "play a decisive role".

Thus the USFI was founded upon an aggravated repetition of the adaptation to alien class forces that had been pioneered in the period from 1948-51. The main target then was petit-bourgeois Stalinism; the new one was petit-bourgeois nationalism and the various forms of Stalinism in the colonial world; Maoism, Castroism-Guevarism etc.

Once again the inability of this brand of degenerate Trotskyism to prove itself a communist current, in decisive events, was demonstrated. In Ceylon the IS and then the USFI had, in the LSSP, a section with a mass following. As in Bolivia in the early 1950s, it was possible to test the USFI leaders in action. Once again it was a story of failure on the part of the section and complicity in that failure by the international leadership.

In Ceylon the LSSP was more like a social democratic party than a Leninist one, as regards both its structure and the consciousness of its lower cadre. Mandel himself was later to acknowledge this: "While being formally a Trotskyist party the LSSP functioned in several areas comparably to a left Social-Democratic party in a relatively 'prosperous' semi-colonial country." ⁶⁴ Obviously the

leaders of the FI knew this all along, but they saw no reason to drastically correct it. After all, if a left social democracy could itself project a revolutionary orientation then so could the "social democratised" LSSP.

Further, if in the semi-colonial countries a "blunt instrument" was sufficient for revolutionary purposes, then it would be stupid for the FI to cut itself off from the LSSP and the prestige of its electoral successes and mass base just for the sake of some of the "old Trotskyist" principles. Thus it did not matter that N.M. Perera, a leading trade unionist and MP, was clearly a reformist, with whom the Marxist centre of the LSSP had split in 1942. When the same centre wanted to re-unite with him in 1950 the proposal was given the blessing of Pablo and Mandel.

Throughout the 1950s the practice of the LSSP was increasingly limited to elections and trade unionism, not revolutionary agitation. In 1960 when the SLFP of the Bandaranaike family gained the largest number of seats and the LSSP lost two of their previous 12 seats, the "Marxist" leaders, Leslie Goonewardene, Colin de Silva and Bernard Soyaa were thrown into crisis. In 1956 they had given the bourgeois SLFP (which had enjoyed widespread support amongst the peasants, whom the LSSP had largely ignored) "responsive co-operation" when it was in government.

In 1960 they opted to give the new Bandaranaike government "critical support". Here again, as in Bolivia, an FI section went beyond the defence of a government, which was carrying out democratic or anti-imperialist measures against domestic or imperialist reaction, to political support for that government (albeit with "criticisms"). Only in 1961 did the IS and its World Congress call for a radical change in the political course being carried out by the LSSP, after the LSSP had voted for the SLFP's budget in 1960. This criticism was too little, too late. The failure of the IS and later the USFI to support the building of a fraction of the left in the LSSP, paved the way for the later treachery.

In the context of what was to happen in 1964, Pierre Frank's explanation of why the IS refused to call a left faction into being is nothing short of disgraceful. In his oily and deceitful history of the FI, he says that the left, in the persons of Edmund Samarakoddy and Bala Tampoe, "defended correct, principled positions, but in a political form that the International considered sectarian".⁶⁵

This "sectarianism" consisted of a refusal to go peacefully along with the class collaboration being cooked up by Perera and not properly opposed by Goonewardene. Obviously too much for Trotsky's former foe, the unreconstructed opportunist Frank, to stomach. The results of the IS's refusal to give wholehearted support to the left, and the left's own failure to organise an independent faction fight, quickly followed.

In 1963 the LSSP formed a popular front with the Stalinists and a small party called the MEP, which was predominantly petit-bourgeois in composition, on the basis of a government programme of limited reform demands. This United Left Front, as Mandel and Frank termed it, was the policy argued for by the FI leaders. In April 1964 the USFI wrote to the LSSP: "The United Front of the left, strengthened by mass struggle and directed to the - establishment of its own political power on a genuinely socialist programme, provides a means of stemming the tide of reaction and uniting the masses and ranks of our own party for the ultimate realisation of our perspectives, Ceylon can provide another Cuba or Algeria and prove to be of even greater inspiration to revolutionary minded workers throughout the world,"⁶⁶

The goal of the "Trotskyists" had thus become to provide the world working class with another Castro or Ben Bella! For the LSSP the choice soon became one between a popular front in government with the SLFP, or a popular front out in the cold against the SLFP. The USFI were not able to provide any principled timely guidance.

When mass strikes threatened to topple the SLFP government strikes in some cases led by LSSP left wingers - in the spring of 1964, the LSSP leader Perera entered into negotiations with Mrs Bandaranaike who, since her husband's death, was leader of the SLFP. An agreement was struck, The LSSP congress voted by a big majority in favour of a deal and Perera entered the government as Finance Minister. The arrival of Pierre Frank armed with the FIs belated threat of expulsion one

day before the LSSP's conference could not stop the LSSP leaders.

In Ceylon, as in Bolivia, Pablo, Mandel, Frank and the SWP leaders' politics were carried into life and revealed as thoroughly Menshevik in nature. The semi-colonial bourgeoisie (or an anti-imperialist wing of it) and thoroughly bourgeois nationalist parties were given "critical support" in the manner of the Stalin-Bukharin Comintern.

The 1966/7 "left turn" of the Castroites (OLAS, Guevara's intervention in Bolivia etc) had a dramatic effect on the USFI. By the time of its 1969 Congress the adaptation had reached the stage of espousal of guerrilla warfare as the strategy of the Third World "revolution"~ Such armed struggle was stressed "not merely as one of the aspects of the revolutionary work, but as a fundamental aspect on a continental scale." 67 In this way the whole programme of this "Fourth International" amounted to nothing more than a carbon copy of Guevarism.

The central and leading role of the proletariat, its tactics and methods of struggle, soviets, democratic and transitional demands, the Leninist Party, everything was thrown unceremoniously overboard. It was only the chaos that this policy wreaked in the Latin American sections, together with the failure of Guevarism and Castro's return to "orthodox" Stalinist tactics in the early 1970s that brought an end to this experiment.

The SWP(US) and its allies in the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency/ Faction, were able to mount many formally correct "orthodox" criticisms of this policy. The SWP and its European supporters were motivated, however, by a desire not to see the ultra-leftism associated with guerrillaism applied in the metropolitan countries. They were strengthened in their opposition by support from the Latin American USFI leaders who knew from bitter experience the suicidal consequences of Guevarist schemas.

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s the evidence against the 1969 decision mounted. The Argentine PRT (Combatiente) actually set up a guerrilla force, the ERP (People's Revolutionary Army) in 1970.

It suffered terribly from state repression and evolved politically towards populism/terrorism and broke from the USFI in 1973. Similar events occurred in Bolivia. From 1972 to 1977 the USFI was divided by factional strife over the issue. Eventually, in 1979, the 11th World Congress blandly announced that "the Fourth International promoted an incorrect political orientation for several years." 68

In the years 1968-74, in response to the major class struggles in France, Italy and Britain, the USFI made a sharp "left" turn. But this did not escape the orbit of left centrism, that is, it saw no return to the Leninist-Trotskyist programme or tactics. From 1969, in the metropolitan imperialist countries the USFI adapted to the consciousness of the student movement under the slogan of the "New Youth Vanguard".

This was based on an impressionistic "theory" of the May '68 events in France; that students could act as a "detonator", that colleges and universities should become "Red Bases", that the struggle was "from the periphery to the centre." These theories only amounted to an excuse for stunts among the radical petty-bourgeoisie and an adamant refusal to orient the newly radicalised youth towards the working class and its traditional parties and trade unions.

In essence this "leftism" was an opportunist avoidance of the need to combat reformism in the working class. The USFI sections were consequently on the sidelines of the class struggle eruptions of the early '70s (e.g. in Britain 1972-4.) It was in this period (1972-4) that the Mandel-Frank-Maitan "European" majority developed their theory of a "New Vanguard of a Mass Character." This was to be an amalgamation of the youth (students) of the late 60s with the struggles of the Italian, Spanish and British workers. It was defined, conveniently, as "the totality of forces acting independently and to the left of traditional bureaucratic leadership of the mass movement." 69

The "Women's Movement" was to be added later. The perspective of this vanguard was the "creation of situations of dual power." The events in Portugal in 1974-5 completely wrecked this

centrist policy and revealed the political bankruptcy that had devised it. In Portugal the "new mass vanguard" of young soldiers, workers, and students certainly existed and it was towards this formation that the IC (the 'majority' USFI section) adapted itself. This milieu was characterised by illusions in the MFA (the Armed Force Movement) particularly in its charismatic leader Carvalho. When the Socialist Party of Mario Soares, excluded from power by the CP/MFA, turned to inciting counter-revolutionary attacks on the CP in the Summer of 1975, the LCI joined a popular front in support of the left-Bonapartist 6th Provisional Government. After the fall of that government they swung to the left and became involved in the "insurrection" that was provoked in November of that year.

Meanwhile, the pro-SWP section in Portugal supported Soares' counter-revolutionary campaign throughout the period on the pretext of "defending democracy". Neither section was actually able to pose a consistent defence of democratic rights against both the MF A and the counter-revolution, neither could utilise the united front tactic to win the proletarian rank and file of the CP and the SF. Thus, Portugal revealed in a particularly stark fashion the bankruptcy and inveterate centrism of the USFI, even in its leftward oscillations. Their positions amounted to a complete inability, indeed unwillingness, to fight against the misleaders of the working class, whether they be Stalinists, social democrats or petit-bourgeois nationalists.

The shipwreck of the majority's leftist position in the mid to late '70s resulted in a turn to the right and, therefore, to a certain rapprochement with the SWP. This turn was reflected in the 1979 Congress Documents. Once again it was the more circumspect and verbally more orthodox Mandel who pulled back from the leftist phase and prepared for a new adaptationist turn towards the "traditional bureaucratic leaderships" which the earlier phase had attempted to bypass. The banner of the 1979 Congress was adaptation to left social democracy and Eurostalinism on the one hand and to petty bourgeois nationalism (the Sandinistas) on the other.

The USFI leaders prepared an adaptationist response to the development of "Eurocommunism". Mandel's "Theses on Socialist Democracy" discuss the question in an entirely formal, abstract and therefore fundamentally false and centrist fashion. His starting point is not the class struggle, particularly the struggle for power, but a debate on the desirability of an "extension of democratic rights for the toilers beyond those already enjoyed under conditions of advanced bourgeois democracy". 70

Thus, he envisages Soviets, first and foremost, as instruments of self-administration and not as instruments of struggle. From this angle he is anxious to defend the democratic rights of all parties, including bourgeois ones, provided they "in practice respect collective property and the workers' state constitution", 71

This utopian recipe is served up as the only way to convince workers that communism is "democratic". In this the 1979 Congress, following Mandel, obscured the whole period of civil war that precedes and follows the seizure of power. In his eagerness to soothe the democratic illusions of the western proletariat and radical petit-bourgeois, Mandel covers over that "most authoritarian thing" - the revolution. He obscures the nature of parties as organs of class combat, he obscures the class nature and limits of proletarian democracy.

In Nicaragua the USFI's concern for democracy, bourgeois or proletarian, is, however, conspicuous by its absence. Here, after the Sandinistas took power, the USFI unceremoniously dropped its previous programme in favour of gentle advice to the FSLN that it should follow the "Cuban Road" (a policy strongly argued against by none other than Fidel Castro himself). The USFI informed the world that "The character and history of the leadership of the FSLN ... show that it would be an error to place any a priori limits beyond which decisive sectors of the FSLN leadership cannot go as the process of permanent revolution unfolds." 72

For this reason the GNR government, with its bourgeois ministers was supported by the USFI. This government was clearly a popular front i.e. a class collaborationist one based on a programme of capitalist reconstruction and the demobilisation of the committees and spontaneous armed militias that had formed in the anti-Somoza insurrection.

The USFI and the SWP offer, at best, a "Cuban" resolution to the situation. That is a controlled Stalinist overturn of property relations after the democratic workers' and peasants' organs of struggle have been converted into bureaucratic tools of the FSLN. There would be no question of proletarian democracy or of a healthy workers' state.

Thus the USFI confirmed once again that it had no programmatic alternative to the Castroite Stalinist programme. It therefore followed that the USFI intervened directly in Nicaragua to prevent the formation of a "Trotskyist" party, provoking a split with the forces of Moreno's Bolshevik Fraction on the eve of the 1979 World Congress.

In summation, the consequence of the ingrained centrism of the leadership of the USFI has been the dissolution of the principles of a disciplined combat party and of democratic centralism. The national section and the international itself are loose coalitions of permanent factionalists. In every serious pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation the "sections of the International" have failed to maintain any strategic or organisational unity (Portugal, Iran, Nicaragua). The USFI sections systematically adapt to petit-bourgeois forces within and without the workers' movement. In the trade unions they baulk at the task of organising a communist-led movement of the base, of the rank and file, against the trade union bureaucrats of left and right.

The term "class struggle tendency" becomes a cover for a political bloc with the "left" elements of the bureaucracy and an alibi for not raising a communist action programme for the transformation of the unions and the throwing out of the bureaucrats. With regard to movements of the oppressed: women, nationalities, blacks and immigrants, gays, the USFI advocates "autonomous movements". It thus advocates "all class", i.e. class collaborationist movements, and dissociates itself from the struggle for proletarian and communist leadership in these struggles. It rejects the perspective of a party-led mass working class women's movement or rank and file movement in the trade unions. Furthermore it adapts to the petit-bourgeois ideologies within these spheres and struggles.

As we have seen neither the IC nor any of its principal components constituted a revolutionary opposition to the Pablo led IS.

They constituted one of the degenerating fragments of world Trotskyism, not a force for principled regeneration. Certain groupings today claim that the IC in 1953 did represent, albeit in a partial and inadequate manner an attempt to regenerate Trotskyism. Further, they would argue that the "IC Tradition" represents the continuity of Trotskyism, notwithstanding the criticisms that might now be made of that tradition with hindsight. Not surprisingly it is groups emerging from or at some point involved with, the IC tradition that hold to such positions the British WSL, the iSt, groupings within the OCRFI/FI OCR) tradition etc. These judgements stem from a refusal to recognise that "Trotskyism": if it means anything, is the continuity of revolutionary communism. The formal adherence to dogma that characterised the IC was not revolutionary communism; in tactics, strategy and programme the IC groupings subverted communism.

The first thing to note about the "IC Tradition" is that it is a myth. It simply does not exist. The IC was never a coherent, programmatically united and democratically organised tendency. In the name of "orthodox Trotskyism" which was defined at the purely abstract level of being in favour of the building of Trotskyist parties (something the "Pabloites" had never had any real difficulty in accepting and articulating) - the IC groups split the FI without a political fight in the sections or at the scheduled World Congress.

Apart from the SWP's Open Letter" and a handful of documents from the French and the Americans against "Pabloite Revisionism" - all of which actually centre on conjunctural events and do not draw up a political balance sheet of the method and emergence of "Pabloism" - no major documents of the IC were produced in 1953 or for a long time after. Several short resolutions were produced in 1954 and 1955 on Vietnam and Algeria, but that was all. The large sections of the IC- the SWP, the French and the British-gave no central direction to the smaller groups in Canada, Chile, New Zealand, Argentina (Moreno's FOR), Iceland, Switzerland, Greece and the Chinese exiles. The French, and then the British held the secretaryship but were unable or unwilling to galvanise the IC into active life as an international organisation.

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

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

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

The incoherent nature of the IC was demonstrated by the fact that a principal leader, Cannon, re-opened discussions with Pablo and the IS (via the LSSP) in 1954 (seven months after the split). He wrote to Goonewardene in May 1954 that "there. . . . is still a chance" for reunification if only the world congress were postponed 7 3. That is, reunification was now only blocked by an organisational consideration.

This, despite the fact that the 1953 split was described thus, in the "Open Letter" "The lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organisationally." 74 In a word, this was rhetoric purely for public consumption. By 1956, Cannon and the SWP were again pushing for unity. In 1957, Cannon proposed a "sweeping organisational compromise, which would permit the formal unification of the international movement before the dispute is settled. This organisational compromise cannot be left to the chance decision of a Congress." 75

In fact, from early 1957, while Cannon and the SWP had not changed their mind about Pablo's intolerable regime, they were drawing closer to the Mandel/Frank/Maitan axis, whose greater "formal orthodoxy" and verbal anti-Stalinism was gaining ground in the IS after the Hungarian revolution. This event rudely disturbed illusions of an uninterrupted process of reforms within Stalinism.

Khrushchev and company were starkly revealed as the butchers of the Hungarian proletariat; Nagy and Gomulka as the treacherous misleaders of powerful political revolutionary movements. This did not, however, prevent the IS from describing the Gomulka-ites as "a centrist tendency evolving to the Left".

The triumph of Mandel's "harder" positions convinced Cannon that a deal could be struck. This, however, would have seriously endangered the separate national projects of Lambert and Healy who, consequently now revived their interest in the fight against "Pabloism". It was this Cannon opens the door to unity with the Pabloites in 1954 that prompted Healy to print Hunter's "Under a Stolen Flag" which declared that "the gulf between Pabloite revisionism and ourselves grows wider and wider." 76

Healy pushed for a conference of the IC. When it took place in 1958, the one thing the SWP did ensure was that it did not proclaim itself "The Fourth World Congress of the FI" as the British

proposed.

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

Thus the SWP talked endlessly of the "cult" of Pablo. Gerry Healy explained to the SLL in 1966 that:

"Then, in 1951, came Pablo".⁷⁷ Actually Healy had, at that time been working closely with Pablo for at least five years. The interminable series of splits that were later to take place within the IC arose because there was no common political basis to this "anti-Pabloism"~ Each group had their own view of what the "essence of Pabloism" was. For the SWP, Pabloism equalled the "liquidation" of the party that is the organisational dissolution of the party. Whatever else Cannon proved himself willing to junk, he was determined to hang onto "the party". The problem for the SWP arose when the IS did not liquidate the FI or its sections. The barrier to unity was effectively removed.

For the Healy group the essence of Pabloism was an ever changing variety of things. It was capitulation to Stalinism, failure to build parties, an "objectivist" view of the revolution. All of these assessments changed as the Healyites own activities and political positions changed, often into what had once been characterised as "Pabloite" by Healy .

Thus, Healy was driven to discover the "roots" of Pabloism. His post1959 discoveries concentrated on the question of "method" and "dialectical materialism".

Building on Trotsky's strictures to the SWP to fight against pragmatism, Healy developed an abstract "philosophical" critique of Pabloism and of the Americans' later submission to it. This enabled him to turn his back on questions of programme and tactics where his own record was so compromised that it would not bear any serious inspection.

In 1966 he argued: "The differences between revisionism and revolutionary Marxism today boils itself down to the differences between idealism and dialectical materialism and not what this individual or that individual is supposed to have done".⁷⁸ Very convenient for Healy! His "method" enabled him to wipe his own slate clean. But it was a far cry from Trotsky's method which always started with and returned to, experience, the supreme criterion of human knowledge.

For the French, the Lambert-led QCI, Pabloism was in essence neither liquidation of the party, nor a wrong philosophical method. Their initial and abiding hostility to Pabloism lay in their Stalinophobia. In their most refined definition of Pabloism, the OCI declared that Pablo's "formal" Marxism and his mechanical application of Trotsky's perspectives "had its finished expression in the conception of a finished Fourth International and parties, endowed with a pyramid style hierarchy, with world congresses, of ultra-centralist status, which had only to strengthen itself progressively".⁷⁹

This definition - a systematisation and a defence of the IC's history of complete federalism - was elaborated, as usual, to suit a factional purpose. The OCI had no intentions of falling under the "democratic centralist" control of an SLL-dominated IC in 1966.

In all three groupings we find a shifting analysis of "Pabloism". The definitions produced were virtually all motivated by conjunctural, factional considerations. Of course there were a number of shared assumptions. The ridiculous idea that all evil stemmed from the person of Pablo, and that this was due to his petit-bourgeois class origins was a common thread inside the IC.

This was merely a useful means of diverting attention from the programmatic issues at stake. We assess the nature of somebody's political positions first and then deduce and demonstrate the class origins of those positions. This was how Trotsky dealt with the Burnham/Shachtman faction. The IC inverted Trotsky's approach, yelling petit-bourgeois at Pablo first, and giving his political positions

only scant attention second.

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

As we have shown, from 1954 onwards the SWP lapsed from a position of fighting the IS, to one of fighting to re-unify the IC with the IS. Only organisational considerations were raised as an obstacle to early reunification. Ignoring the supposed political issues of the 1953 split, the SWP hagiographer Les Evans explained: "By 1956 their public line (i.e. the IS's -Eds) became very close to that of the International Committee, and the leadership of the SWP concluded that, on the political positions on which the two sides stood, continuation of the split could not be justified. It was time to consider re-unification".⁸⁰

Following this "turn" by the SWP, Joseph Hansen carried out pioneering work to show that the SWP could outdo the IS in its capitulation to Stalinism. In 1958 he crisply summed up what the IS had obfuscated with sophistry - namely that the political revolution was merely a series of reforms. In his "Proposed Roads to Soviet Democracy" he wrote: "It is much closer to reality to view the programme of political revolution as the total series of reforms, gained through militant struggle, culminating in the transfer of power to the workers".⁸¹ Hansen really got his teeth into this theme after the Cuban revolution. Empirically registering the existence of an economy which was in essentials identical to Eastern Europe in Cuba, and noting the absence of a "Stalinist" leadership in the July 26th Movement, Hansen concluded that Cuba was a healthy workers' state.

Strong on pragmatism, but not too hot with dialectics, Hansen decided that there was no need for a Trotskyist party in Cuba, that Castro was an "unconscious Trotskyist" and that, therefore, the programme of political revolution did not apply to Cuba. We have dealt elsewhere with the Cuban revolution and Hansen's analysis of it.⁸² Suffice it to say that Hansen "overlooked" the absence of independent working class action and organisation in the Cuban revolution - soviets, a real workers' militia, workers' control in the planned economy, etc. He overlooked the stages of the Cuban revolution during which Castro became assimilated to Stalinism, he overlooked the demobilisation of the working class consciously carried out by Castro after the Bay of Pigs invasion. In short, he held a completely anti-Trotskyist view of the Cuban revolution.

This particular piece of revisionism not only cleared the way to re-unification with the IS in 1963. It provided a theoretical justification for the guerrilla-ist turn of the USFI in the late 1960s (despite Hansen's opposition to that turn). Today it has brought the SWP to the threshold of an abandonment of even the trappings of formal "Trotskyism".

Attacks on the theory of Permanent Revolution by Doug Jenness, a leader of the SWP, is a sign of things to come. The SWP is lurching ever closer to crossing into the Stalinist camp via the "Cuban road".

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

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

Healy and Slaughter insisted that Cuba was state capitalist, and Castro a bourgeois bonaparte like Nasser or Peron. To defend this curious and inconsistent position, they borrowed "normative" arguments from the new class theorists, and hid them under a barrage of Hegelianised "dialectics".

The OCI, on the other hand, decided that a "phantom bourgeoisie" held power in Cuba, via Castro.

Such positions prevented any serious or searching analysis of the roots of the degeneration of the FI after the war. The SLL and the OCI, therefore, built into their politics different elements of the 1948-5 I revisionism. Whilst the IC was united only by the hostility to the USFI, and expressed this in a vacuous "anti-Pabloism", the two key organisations within it, the OCI and the SLL, were politically very different organisations which were moving in different directions.

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

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

After the Hungarian revolution, defections from the British CP and the creation of loose socialist forums provided Healy with a new audience and recruits. After 1957, the Newsletter also served to rally a number of rank and file trade union militants around it. The theoretical journal "Labour Review" attracted some able intellectuals. Originally, Healy had insisted that both publications were not "sectional Trotskyist publications". This was in line with his earlier "deep entry" project.

The prospect of recruitment from the CP, however, modified this perspective and pushed the Healy group to more of an independent orientation. In 1959 the Socialist Labour League (SLL) was founded as an independent group, although 100 of its 159 founding members were still in the Labour Party. A relatively open and pugnacious campaign followed in the Labour Party's new youth organisation, the Young Socialists. It was led by SLL members, and resulted in the closing down of the YS and mass expulsions in 1964.

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

By 1963, flushed with success, the Healy group returned to catastrophist perspectives of the type that Pablo had pioneered in 1950.

The difference lay in the conclusion drawn from the imminent collapse.

Healy substituted for Pablo's and his own former deep entry, a hysterical "third period" style fetishisation of "building the party". At its Fifth Annual Conference in 1963, the SLL Perspectives declared: "The problems of the British economy are so acute, and the relations between capital and its agents so full of contradictions, that the problem of power is in fact continually posed, provided there can be built a leadership".⁸³ This involves a total confusion of the objective and the subjective.

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

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

paper, hyper-activism and a huge turnover in membership.

Error began to turn into paranoia. Bad philosophy not only meant mistakes, it resulted in its adherents becoming enemies of the SLL, and therefore the raw material for...police infiltration. The SLL's/WRP's ludicrous elevation of "philosophy" in the name of party building, to a level way beyond the real world, inevitably produced not only sectarianism, but also twisted fantasy: "From time to time it is possible for the method of subjectivism and gossip to make an impact on cynics and tired refugees from the class struggle, but this is purely temporary...It is also very easy to exploit those tendencies who slander and gossip. The police do this constantly. They simply send agents into these groups (reference to the Cliff and Grant groups - Eds) who will be prepared to join heartily in condemning the SLL...It is simply that the irresponsible anti SLL factional climate in their group assists the police".⁸⁴ By a sleight of hand, opposition to the SLL becomes assistance to the bourgeois state - and thus absolves the SLL from political debate with its opponents.

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

They defined it as "a relationship between mass workers' parties of a temporary character for the purpose of winning the masses to the communist party".⁸⁵ This was a narrow, one sided and false view of the united front. It led directly to the abandonment of organising a rank and file movement in the unions. In place of this, the SLL built the All Trades Union Alliance as its very own trade union organisation that put on impressive rallies, attracted unsuspecting militants and tried to rope them into the party.

This sectarianism was also extended to the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC). By the late 1960s, the VSC was mobilising thousands on the streets against US imperialism's slaughter of the Vietnamese. The masters of the dialectic, however, understood better the real nature of such demonstrations. In his "Balance Sheet of Revisionism", SLL/WRP "theoretician" Slaughter declared: "The content of the October 27th demonstration, the essential aim of the VSC and its political directors was, remains, the rallying together of some alternative to the building of the Socialist Labour League as the revolutionary Marxist party, and its daily paper". ⁸⁶

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

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

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

Despite their "anti-Pabloism", the OCI capitulated to non revolutionary communist forces in the anti-imperialist struggle. During the Algerian war of independence, the Lambertists supported the MNA of Messali Hadj. The French inspired the 1955 resolution of the IC which declared: "In the person of Messali Hadj, the oppressed and exploited of the world possess a living symbol of this (anti imperialist/working class- Eds) struggle".⁷ They supported the MNA against the Moscow-supported petit bourgeois nationalist FLN, on the grounds that the MNA had a proletarian orientation.

La Verite offered to defend "the genuine Algerian revolutionaries against FLN killers".⁸⁸ Their "anti-Pabloism" thus led the OCI to support a group of vacillating nationalists around Hadj against the more consistent nationalists of the FLN. The truth was that the MNA soon became a pawn in the hands of the French government against the FLN and the national struggle. The MNA ended up in a block with the OAS. Their "working class" orientation, presented by the Lambertists as a token of their revolutionism, did not prevent them from betraying the anti-imperialist struggle.

The Lambertists belatedly were forced themselves to admit this. However, it led them into a sectarian position with regard to anti-imperialist struggles. They refused to call for the victory of the NLF in its battle with American imperialism in the Vietnam war. In the 1967 Arab/Israeli war, the OCI condemned both sides as bourgeois and counter-revolutionary, and took a dual defeatist position.

A product of the OCI's Stalinophobia and softness on social democracy, was its chronic tendency to substitute democratic programmes for the Transitional Programme. In France after de Gaulle's 1958 coup, Lambert advanced "Defense des Acquis" - a strictly democratic programme. In the colonial and semi-colonial world, the Constituent Assembly demand was turned into a strategic demand. In the 1980s this demand was advanced in a potentially counter-revolutionary way in the context of the political revolution in Poland. In Nicaragua after 1979 it was used as the central slogan, at the expense of demands focusing on building soviets and the struggle for workers' power.

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

Flowing from these positions is the transformation of the United Front into a strategy. The OCI/PCI calls for the "unity" of the workers' parties, for a CP/SP government, which they characterise as a workers' government, for class against class. However, by using these slogans in a strategic sense, the OCI/PCI present them in purely literary terms. The "workers' government" and united front slogans bear no relation to working class action. They are passive slogans and can lead to abstentionism.

Thus, where unity in action was posed in the stormy days of May 1968, the OCI raised class unity slogans as an alternative to joining the battles against the state. On the night of the barricades, the OCI held a meeting and decided to march to convince the students not to continue fighting. When the students refused, the OCI marched off, consoling themselves with chants of working class unity.

This policy was an equal and opposite response to the SLL's abandonment of the united front. Dramatically opposite, it was equally removed from a revolutionary communist position. Thus the OCI's Central Committee- declared in 1971 of the united front: "It is a strategic line in the sense that it is always (that is, independent of circumstances, relationship of forces, tactical considerations in the strict sense of the word) present in a revolutionary party".⁸⁹

Finally, the OCI's inveterate hostility to any centralism in the IC indicates their essentially "national Trotskyist" outlook. Using the pretext that the FI was destroyed by Pabloism - a discovery only announced at the Third Congress of the IC in 1966 - the Lambertists insisted that democratic centralism had no place in the IC, as it was not the FI.

They admitted the existence of federalism, arguing: "The SLL has had its own international activity, so has the OCI. Germany and Eastern Europe have remained- the "private hunting grounds" of the

QCI in co-operation with the Hungarian organisation".90

They wanted to keep things that way so as not to come under SLL control, and keep their channels open to the "Pabloite" USFI.

Undoubtedly, it was Healy who led the IC until the late 1960s and imposed the SLL's views upon its public pronouncements. Lambert was increasingly opposed to Healy and Banda as they inclined more and more towards Third Worldism. Lambert himself would have preferred to reject the Arab revolution in favour of accommodation to Zionism (recognition of the "self-determination" of the Jewish workers). Lambert, to boost himself, sought to bring into the IC Guillermo Lora's POR of Bolivia.

Healy at first stalled the 4th Congress of the IC, and then staged a split at the International Youth Rally at Essen. Healy seized on the pretext of Lora's concessions to the CP in the Popular Assembly and the two groups engaged in a ludicrous argument over whether dialectical materialism or the transitional programme was the golden calf to be worshipped by the IC faithful: "Is, or is not, the transitional programme of the FI the highest expression of Marxism?", asked Lambert. 91 After the 1971 split, the IC existed solely as a backyard to the SLL (WRP after 1973), whilst the OCI set up the loose, federal OCRFI, rechristened the Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction) after a failed fusion with the Moreno split from the USFI.

The Transitional Programme of 1938 was not re-elaborated to meet the tasks of the post-war period. It was however revised piecemeal and, by 1951, systematically in a series of theses and documents which were accepted by the whole International. None of the breaks and splits from 1953 onwards has disavowed these revisions or traced to its roots the centrism into which the FI collapsed.

The revolutionary, programmatic continuity of the FI was decisively broken. The task of developing a new programme based on the fundamental doctrine and method of the 1938 programme is a task which directly faces us. Only on this basis can a new Leninist-Trotskyist International be founded.

FOOTNOTES

51. Fourth International (New York, November/December 1951).

52. From an interview in Militant May 12th-19th 1952, quoted in Documents of the Vern-Ryan Tendency (Communard Publishers) p. 41.

53. *ibid.*, p. 43.

54. From G. Lora, "One Year of the Bolivian Revolution", quoted in *ibid.*, p. 80.

55. G. Lora, *Bolivie: de la Naissance du POR A L'Assemblée Populaire* p.35 (Our translation).

56. *The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism* (New York, 1970) p.16.

57. *ibid.*, p. 16.

58. *ibid.*, p. 20. 59. *ibid.*, p. 23.

60. *Dynamics of World Revolution Today* (New York, 1974), p. 30.

61. *ibid.*, p. 37.

62. *ibid.*, p. 38.

63. See also E. Mandel's recent defence of this position in *Revolutionary Marxism Today* (London 1979) p. 96.

64. *Revolutionary Marxism vs Class Collaboration in Sri Lanka* (New York, 1975) p.8.

65. P. Frank *The Fourth International* (London, 1979) p.116.

66. Quoted in *Trotskyism versus Revisionism* (London 1974) Vol 4, p. 235.

67. *Intercontinental Press* (New York, July 14th 1969), Vol 7, No. 26, p. 270.

68. *Intercontinental Press* (New York, January 1980) Special Supplement.

69. The USFI's clearest espousal of this theory is to be found in the 1974 "Theses on Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe" in *Intercontinental Press* (New York, December 23rd 1974) Vol 12, No. 46, p 1822.

70. E. Mandel, *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (Toronto, 1977) p. 13.

71. *ibid.*, p. 27.

72. "Revolution on the March" in *Intercontinental Press* (New York, January 1980).

73. *Trotskyism versus Revisionism* (London, 1974) Vol. 2, p. 154.

74. International Committee Documents 1951-54 (New York, 1974) Vol. 3, p. 137.
75. Trotskyism versus Revisionism op. cit. Vol. 3 p.22.
76. W. Sinclair, "Under a Stolen Flag", in *ibid.*, p. 5.
77. *ibid.*, Vol. 14. p. 274.
78. *ibid.*, p. 307.
79. *ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 72.
80. Towards a History of the Fourth International (New York, 1973) Part 1, p. 17.
81. International Socialist Review (New York, Spring 1958) p. 50.
82. See Workers Power & Irish Workers Group, *The Degenerated Revolution* (London 1982), pp. 93 - 96.
83. Quoted in T. Polan *The SLL - An Autopsy* (Trotskyist Tendency, n.d.), p.16.
84. Trotskyism versus Revisionism op. cit. Vol. 4, p. 302.
85. Quoted in *ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 64.
86. Polan, op. cit., p. 8.
87. Quoted in Trotskyism versus Revisionism op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 132.
88. "La Verite" was the newspaper of the Lambert grouping.
89. Trotskyism versus Revisionism op. cit. Vol. 6. p. 64. (Our emphasis).
90. *ibid.*, Vol. 5., p. 86

Part 4.

After the splits the splinters, 1961-1983

Since the early 1960s various splits from the IC and USFI have attempted to found international tendencies. The slogans of each tendency with regard to the Fourth International differed, but all shared a fundamental error. The calls to "reconstruct", "reunify" or even "for the rebirth of" the Fourth International, were all based on the premise that the continuity of Trotskyism had been safeguarded by one of the two sides in the 1953 split. Thus, each tendency inevitably defended the tradition that they had emerged from up to the point at which they broke from it.

None were prepared to radically re-evaluate these traditions. Calls for "reconstruction" etc., therefore, were calls for a return to one or other post-1953 tradition. Yet those who will not learn from the errors of the past are condemned to repeat them, often in the manner of Marx's famous dictum. Without tracing the errors of the epigones to their roots in the post-war programmatic collapse, no basis for a lasting break with "Pabloism" and "Healyism" existed.

Thus all attempts to "reconstruct" or "reunify" the Fourth International were calls on the existing degenerate fragments to return to their practice prior to the emergence of the particular tendency in question. Even the apparently more far-reaching call for "the rebirth of the FI" put forward by the Spartacist League (US), was an appeal for the reincarnation of an already degenerate (post-1951) FI.

Not surprisingly, despite making valuable contributions on specific questions and despite offering valid, if partial, criticisms of the IC and USFI, all of the tendencies to emerge since the sixties have failed in their attempts at "reconstruction".

All of them have been hamstrung by their failure to understand the nature of the programmatic tasks that face authentic Trotskyists in the struggle for a new International. In this section we will deal with the main splits from the IC and the USFI. The purpose of examining these tendencies is to demonstrate why the failure to take on the key task of re-elaborating the Trotskyist Programme as

the basis of a refounded Trotskyist International has meant that these tendencies have been unable to transcend the centrism of their parent organisations. We cannot here deal with every grouping that claims to be Trotskyist. However, in dealing with the principal splits we will demonstrate the failures that need to be avoided in the construction of an international tendency.

The earliest major split from the IC was the group later to become the international Spartacist tendency. Originating in the SWP(US) as the Revolutionary Tendency (R T) in 1961, the Spartacist grouping saw itself initially as the defender of IC orthodoxy inside the SWP.

The group centred on a number of ex-Shachtmanite youth around James Robertson, Shane Mage and Tim Wohlforth. It emerged in opposition to the Dobbs-Hansen SWP leadership over the question of the Cuban Revolution. While it recoiled in horror from the SWP's liquidationist positions on Cuba, the RT did not develop a coherent alternative to them. Wohlforth, the author of the "Theory of Structural Assimilation" - the only serious attempt to look at the pre-1951 FI positions critically - was later to join Healy in regarding Cuba as state capitalist. Robertson and the Spartacists insisted, in an idealist fashion, that the Cuban workers' state had been ushered in by a "petit bourgeois government" (the Castroites) who, from 1959-60 presided over a state, the class character of which was indeterminate. Such a standpoint in Cuba would have left Trotskyists without an operative programme (for soviets and a workers' militia) in this period.

The RT grouping itself was soon to split under the impact of Hansen's bureaucratic onslaught on it. Robertson linked the SWP's positions on Cuba to a series of errors the party was committing. He argued that it was necessary to characterise the SWP as centrist, and did so in the document "The Centrism of the SWP and the Tasks of the Minority." This produced a rupture with Wohlforth and Healy. Hitherto Healy had seen the RT as a means of exercising pressure on the SWP leadership, thus preventing it from decamping to the IS. As such Healy could not tolerate the Robertson group characterising the party he wanted to keep in the IC, as centrist. Healy's loyal agent Wohlforth therefore split with the RT and even supported its bureaucratic expulsion. The document on the reorganisation by Healy of the Tendency in 1963 argued:

"The tendency must recognise that the SWP is the main instrument for the realisation of socialism in the US....The tendency must not make premature characterisations of the leadership of the SWP, except those, such as Weiss and Swabeck, who have clearly revealed their Pabloism in theory and practice ".....The tendency shall dissolve and shall re-establish itself on the basis of the preceding points." 92

Wohlforth himself was, thereafter, to find himself outside the SWP after the 1963 split in the IC.

Clearly the Robertson group were correct to characterise the politics of the SWP as centrist, though they were over ten years late in their dating of this collapse. Hansen's line on Cuba represented a centrist capitulation par excellence but it was entirely of a piece with the 1948 capitulation to Tito.

Healy absolutely refused to make even such a belated characterisation. The political questions involved were, as always, entirely subordinated to factional manoeuvres. The claim by Wohlforth that to characterise the SWP as centrist was to abandon its "proletarian kernel" was pure demagoguery. Latter day attempts such as that by John Lister in his "Spartacist Truth Kit" 9 3 to suggest that this concern for the workers was at the heart of Healy and Wohlforth's attitude to the SWP, tell us more about Lister's unbroken links with Healyism than about the history of the events in question.

Apart from the fact that the SWP had almost entirely lost its worker base, was a much depleted organisation whose only left elements were youth won from the petit bourgeois radical milieu, political characterisation is not an optional extra made or withheld for diplomatic purposes. Trotsky had a thousand times more reason for seeking to win the proletarian kernel of the Russian CP and the sections of the Comintern. It did not prevent him from clearly characterising the Stalin-Bukharin leadership as centrist.

Healyist position (and Lister's defence of it) is entirely consistent with the USFI's current practice. "Centrism" is the forbidden word - utter it and all discussion stops. Thus these gentlemen confirm Trotsky's observation "centrism does not like to be called by its name." The centrist "views with

hatred the revolutionary principle: state what is. He is inclined to substitute for a principled policy personal manoeuvring and petty organisational diplomacy" .94

However correct the Robertson group were in relation to their characterisation of the SWP they were profoundly wrong in their attitude to the IC. The Robertson group, which became the Spartacist League in 1964, saw its place as being within the "orthodox", and increasingly sectarian, SLL-dominated IC. Thus it failed, not only on Cuba but also on the question of the IC, to develop a fully rounded programmatic alternative to the degenerate fragments of Trotskyism.

Its call for the "rebirth" of the Fourth International was thus founded upon an acceptance of the political method of the SLL and the QCI as good coin. The Spartacists were not completely uncritical of the SLL and I but their criticisms were premised on the belief that there was a qualitative difference between the IC and the IS. Thus Robertson's remarks to the IC conference in April 1966 stated: "We are present at this conference on the basis of our fundamental agreement with the International Resolution of the IC; moreover, the report of Comrade Slaughter was for us solidly communist, unified throughout by revolutionary determination." 95

This sycophancy to Healy's chief intellectual hack availed them little. The conference ended with Healy expelling the SL from the IC, in essence because of the polite criticisms of the IC raised by Robertson.

The failure to go beyond a negative response to "Pabloism" over Cuba, and their loyalty to the IC, prevented the Spartacists from developing towards revolutionary communism. Their errors became codified into a bad method, marked henceforth by a rabid and increasingly rightwing sectarianism. The Spartacist conception of a "fighting propaganda group" is passive and propagandist in nature and therefore sectarian. It is most precisely expressed as follows: "We recognise that a currently embryonic party organisation must necessarily constitute itself in the form of a 'fighting propaganda group' in order by destroying ostensibly revolutionary organisations, to initiate and for drive forward a regroupment process in order thereby to build up one's own organisation." Combined with the demolition squad approach to rival tendencies is the most utter abstention from the class struggle or the organisations of the labour movement. The fig-leaf of a little "exemplary" work is maintained but even here it is stressed that this is not real leadership of real struggles.

"In doing so the character of this work must always be regarded as exemplary, rejecting out of hand any voluntaristic notion of intervening as a propaganda group into all the daily struggles of the working class inasmuch as this would lead to dissipating one's own forces and to liquidating the programme." 96

There are two distortions of the concept of a fighting propaganda group here. First, the fighting propaganda group is portrayed as a stage during which the main task is to "destroy" other groups. Note the choice of words. The Spartacists seek not to win leftward moving centrists to communism, but to destroy them. This perspective leads characteristically to politically disloyal manoeuvres and provocations. In place of political debate, political combat and the destruction of opponents' political arguments, Spartacist groups have engaged in a vicious circle of disruptions, physical confrontations, occupations of meeting rooms and pickets of other tendencies' events. The iSt has consequently developed from a sect into a bizarre cult, well on the road to auto destruction.

Integrally linked to this mission to "destroy" all other tendencies is their adamant refusal to get involved in what they consider to be "minor" struggles of the working class. Their tasks are conceived of in rigid stages; first destroy the left groups, then and only then, turn to the class.

Thus, although as an organisation they do intervene in strikes they consider to be of national importance, individual members (unless they are carrying out exemplary work) abstain from any union activity at work. During the Health Strike in Britain in 1982 their members in the NHS studiously refused to get involved in any activity around the strike. This story is repeated in many other instances. The Spartacists' notion of a fighting propaganda group is a thoroughly abstentionist one. The fighting is only with left groups, not with the class enemy and its agents in the mass organisations of the working class, and the propaganda bears no relation to the key struggles of the

proletariat.

The fighting propaganda group is not, for the Spartacists, a vehicle for programmatic re-elaboration (they do not do any), a vehicle for carrying focussed propaganda into the working class (they de-prioritise such propaganda) or a painful but necessary step which communists strive to outgrow (they revel in remaining a propaganda group). The Spartacist conception of a fighting propaganda group is not ours. Ours is rooted in the methods of Lenin and Trotsky 97. Their conception is alien to the communist tradition.

The content of the Spartacists' propaganda is, as we have said, mainly abuse. Where they do have distinct positions the Spartacists show a complete lack of understanding of the basic tenets of the Marxist programme.

The Spartacists have developed scandalously right-wing positions on the national question in backward countries. They reject Lenin's theory of imperialism (tacitly) and its understanding of oppressed and oppressor nations. In its place they have put concepts such as states consisting of "interpenetrated peoples". The national rights of all "interpenetrated peoples" weigh equally for the Spartacists. Thus in Northern Ireland the Protestant community are "interpenetrated" with the Catholics.

Their "national" rights have to be carefully protected. The Spartacists are therefore unsparing in their criticisms of the Republicans' "sectarian" violence. Attacks in which civilians are killed, such as the Ballykelly pub bombing, are described as "indefensible." 98 This position ignores the fact that one section of these "interpenetrated peoples" - the Catholics - have been imprisoned in a pro-imperialist, artificially imposed statelet. They are subjected to pro-imperialist rule with the complicity of the other people - the Protestants. The national rights of the whole of the Irish people have been subverted by the creation of the Northern statelet. Those fighting to smash that state - the Republicans - despite the inadequacies of their programme, should be supported unconditionally, though critically, by Marxists in Britain. They cannot be equated with the agents of imperialism in the North, the Protestants, as just another side of the same sectarian coin.

The concept of "interpenetrated peoples" is little more than a gloss for the Spartacists' abstentionism in the conflict between the oppressed and their imperialist oppressors. The Spartacists, not surprisingly, apply this method to Israel. The Zionist state becomes a case of "interpenetrated peoples" - the Hebrew masses and the Palestinians - whose national rights have to be respected. The blacks and the Boer Afrikaners in South Africa are another case in point.

In all cases they ignore or minimise the role of imperialism and refuse to adopt Lenin's fundamental standpoint of the difference between oppressed and oppressor nations. In-' deed their great sensitivity to the "national" rights of the Zionist colonists, Protestant bigots land; Afrikaaner racists contrasts sharply with their venomous attacks on the latter's victims. Underlying all of these positions is a metropolitan chauvinism and an aversion to petit-bourgeois led nationalist movements and an identification with labour aristocrats and privileged strata of the proletariat - Protestants in Northern Ireland, Jews in Israel, whites in South Africa.

These positions led to the most pronounced case of abstentionism in the Iranian revolution of 1978/9. Here the mullah-led movement was equated with the Shah in the self-confessedly inoperable slogan "Down with the Shah! Down with the Mullahs! ". The Spartacists completely abandoned the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front, which they also reject in theory, stigmatising it as a "Popular Front". Here again they revealed an inability to distinguish between imperialist countries and their semi-colonial victims. In its place they argued for a strategy of ideological combat against the religious ideas of the Iranian masses.

They ended up, once again, holding an abstentionist position in the test of revolution, and justified it with rationalist, idealist arguments that owed more to Voltaire than Marx and Lenin.

A refusal to identify with the struggles of the oppressed also results in a reactionary identification with the bosses' attempts to keep immigrants out of the metropolitan countries. The Spartacists advocate a racist position on immigration controls: "However, on a sufficiently large scale,

immigration plans could wipe out the national identity of the recipient country...If, for example, there were unlimited immigration into Northern Europe, the population influx from the Mediterranean basin would tend to dissolve the continued identity of small countries like Holland and Belgium." 99 The job of Leninists is to protect this national identity according to the Spartacists!

As well as scab positions on the national question, the other distinctive feature of the Spartacists is their Stalinophilia. Starting from the anti-Trotskyist position that Stalinism has a dual nature - a good side and a bad side - the Spartacists see their role as encouraging the good side which has increasingly come to the fore. In Afghanistan this meant "Hailing the Red Army", as the agents of revolution for this backward country - the masses of which get treated to a tirade of chauvinist abuse from the Spartacists.

The political revolutionary situation in Poland in 1980/81 was also not to the liking of the Spartacists. Fearing Catholic restorationism, they decided that the best outcome to the crisis was a Soviet invasion to crush the Polish working class. When this didn't materialise they were more than ready to applaud the bloody Jaruzelski coup and the clampdown on the Polish workers' organisations that came with it.

They argued: "If the present crackdown restores something like the tenuous social equilibrium which existed in Poland before the Gdansk strikes last August, a tacit understanding that if the people left the government alone, the government would leave the people alone - conditions will be opened again for the crystallisation of a Leninist-Trotskyist party.,,100 What a confession of bankruptcy. Stalinist "social equilibrium" is preferred by the iSt to a political revolutionary crisis, as the best conditions for building a party.

The iSt are a Stalinophilic right-sectarian cult. They have reproduced in a bizarre parody Pablo's Stalinophile positions of 1949-51, a living proof that they never understood "the roots of Pabloism." The Spartacists, as a neo-Bordigist sect, reject transitional demands such as nationalisation under workers control in favour of calls to "seize and sell" bankrupt firms. In Chrysler they argued that the sale of stocks and plant should be shared out as redundancy pay. The alibi offered for this unheard of reactionary petit-bourgeois utopia was the backwardness of the American workers!

The Spartacists are totally incapable of developing action programmes and tactics for the present period of crisis and intensified class battles. However, they occasionally seize upon and fetishize one tactic to beat the detested rivals over the head. Under the apparently innocuous (and for communists, banal), slogan "Picket lines mean don't cross" they "elevated" the picket-line to a principle.

Thus they attack workers (or more probably members of the groups they wish to destroy) for "crossing picket lines" where only pickets of supplies are mounted or where the picket is aimed at a different section of the workforce. Their venom against "scabs" and their posing as defenders of picket lines rings rather hollow given their systematic abstentionism from most workers' struggles and their restriction of their "activities" to so-called exemplary cases (Le. situations where they can directly attack rival groups). Thus, their class struggle activity turns out, on ins'lection, to be merely a sub-category of their demolition job aimed at ostensibly Trotskyist organisations. They totally reject the united front tactic. In practice they are incapable of advocating any tactics based on it, apart from clownish ultimatums to rival groupings to join their demonstrations and pickets.

They reject all applications and extensions of it; critical electoral support of workers' parties, where they pose as a prerequisite areas of programmatic agreement; work within the proletarian organisations involved in a popular front to achieve a "break with the bourgeoisie"; the workers' government, which they treat as a pseudonym for the proletarian dictatorship; the Labor Party slogan which they present as an ultimatum ("Dump the bureaucrats!") and use as a pseudonym for the revolutionary party. In all these cases sectarian intransigence covers gross opportunist appetites. Thus whilst they refused critical support to Labour in 1979 and 1982 they found Benn on the right side of a "class struggle line" on the question of Soviet defencism! All this represents a complete break from the Transitional Programme, and the Comintern and ILO heritage on which it was

founded.

The degenerating sections of the iSt are little more than branches of the SL/US - a reversal of the situation pertaining in the Healyite IC but in essence the same. The iSt is manifestly a dead sect totally incapable of furthering (and increasingly incapable of hindering) the fight for a new International.

In March 1976 a number of organisations to the left of the USFI launched the Necessary International Initiative. These groups saw the USFI as qualitatively better than the IC or OCRFI and saw their initiative as an attempt to orient towards the USFI. These groups were the FMR (whose main organisation was the La Classe group led by Roberto Massari in Italy), the Spartacusbund (BRD), and two Austrian groups who were later to become the IKL. In September 1976 the British I-CL joined the NIL.

The NII was based on a common assessment of the defects of the major international "Trotskyist" tendencies on the Portuguese revolution of 1974/5. It was not, however, based on a positive and fully defined programmatic position on that revolution. The NII was in fact in agreement only on a series of negative positions. It never had any common programmatic positions beyond very general statements about Portugal. It was also marked by an adaptationist attitude to the USFI which it characterised as "centrism sui generis." The main inspirers of this position, Roberto Massari's FMR, maintained that of all the fragments of the Fourth International the USFI was the healthiest and the one that could- through external pressure rather than internal reform - find its way back to revolutionary Marxism, while it could never, in its present state, pass over to reformism. The FMR's self-critical balance sheet of the NII made this clear when it argued:

"In particular we didn't keep in account that the programmatic declarations of the FMR states very clear that the best energies which pledge allegiance to trotskyism are today those inside the USec...101

The substance of "centrism sui generis" (with which the British I-CL made known their disagreement while they were in the NII) was that formal adherence to Trotskyism prevented the USFI from going the way of previous centrists such as Kautsky -i.e. into reformism. In other words here was a species of centrism which, unlike any other, did not vacillate between reform and revolution with the consequent possibility of its going over definitively to reformism. Such an analysis is based on a shallow interpretation of the FI's post-war history. There have been cases of sections going over to reformism - the LSSP in Ceylon. Under Pablo the IS went very near to complete capitulation to Stalinism and petit-bourgeois nationalism.

Today it is declared that no section of the USFI is needed in Nicaragua. All of these experiences clearly indicate that the possibility of the USFI as a whole passing into the camp of social democracy, Stalinism or petit-bourgeois nationalism does exist and will be decided by the march of events. The only real difference between the USFI and a centrist like Kautsky is that since the USFI, unlike the SPD and the Second International, does not lead mass forces it has not yet been put to a decisive test. This has allowed its international leadership to enjoy a prolonged existence as a vacillating centrist organisation.

While the CL held back from describing the USFI as "centrism sui generis" the nevertheless maintained an equivocal position that it was the "mainstream" Trotskyist current. That is, they refused to characterise it clearly as centrist or indeed to give it any political characterisation. Sean Matgamna of the I-CL wrote in 1976 that: "The I-CL continues to believe that the USFI is the mainstream that has emerged from the communist tendency personified by Leon Trotsky." 102

The real weakness of this position - its potential accommodation to the USFI- was offset in the fusion document between Workers' Fight and Workers Power which argued clearly that the USFI was: "a centrist obstacle to the building of such an International." 103

However, even this document contained the flaw built into the "mainstream" position which we would now criticise. We emphatically reject the view that the USFI represented a qualitatively better tradition than that of the IC. Any choice between these two tendencies reflects a failure to

analyse their common origin in centrist degeneration and prepares a repetition of their chronic errors.

Lacking any common programmatic positions as a basis for their Initiative, the tendencies in the NII descended into manoeuvres against one another followed by fragmentation. The I-CL and IKL formed a bloc to resist the FMR's utilisation of the NII as a vehicle for recruitment to itself. Having plundered the Spartacusbund and IKL for recruits the FMR left the NII complaining that discussion was impossible because the I-CL and IKL had failed to produce an internal bulletin.

After a period of independent existence the FMR, which still had as its aim a return to the USFI set its course firmly towards liquidationism.

The Italian section disappeared into Democrazia Proletaria, a group emerging from the break up of the semi-Maoist tradition in Italy with the expressed popular frontist aim of building a "broad democratic opposition" in Italy.

The I-CL became increasingly an Anglo-centric sect burying itself ever deeper in the Labour Party (until later it ended up in the TILC via its fusion with the WSL - an indication of how seriously it takes international regroupment is that it now belongs to a body that it had previously sharply criticised e.g. at the TILC summer 1980 rally.)¹⁰⁴ The IKL/Spartacusbund maintained the fiction of an international tendency without having established a programmatic basis or an international leadership.

The unreality of this tendency's existence was cruelly exposed when, in late 1980, it was thrown into disarray by the desertion of key leaders within the IKL. These leaders left because they claimed that the tendency was not capable of developing politically. The remainder of the IKL has continued to exist since the split and, on the question of the basis for an international tendency, does recognise that programmatic clarity and agreement has to come first. The Spartacusbund, savaged by a series of splits (to the FMR, the iSt') were unable to maintain the tendency under their leadership, being basically immobilised by adherence to a collection of established positions (e.g. on Social Democracy) that they were unable to develop or apply tactically in the BRD.

Consequently the organisation dissolved in the course of 1981 into a discussion grouping in Berlin and a group which established itself in May 1982 as the Gruppe Arbeitermacht.

The lesson of the NII experience is clear. Any international regroupment has to be based on far more than just a series of appraisals about what the centrists are doing wrong. We are convinced that it has to be based on a clear statement of common goals and a firm intention to re-elaborate the programme.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT) has its origins within the Lambertist OCRFI. The two principal organisations within the FIT, Política Obrera (PO) of Argentina, and the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) of Bolivia, were amongst the founding organisations of the OCRFI.

The POR joined the International Committee during the factional struggle between Healy and Lambert. It was the first time the POBR, led by Guillermo Lora, had established even the semblance of real international links since the 1952 revolution in Bolivia. For Lambert the POR were a valuable weapon in the struggle against Healy. Thus, while some criticisms of the POR's positions in the 1971 revolutionary turmoil were made at the OCRFI's founding conference, the debacle of 1952 was not examined. Furthermore, the criticisms of the POR's role in 1971 were made within a context of overall agreement with its policy in 1971: "The organisations present affirm first of all their total agreement with the policy carried out by the POR in the course of the Bolivian revolution of 1970-71".¹⁰⁵ The criticisms of the POR centred on the distinction that it made between the "national bourgeoisie" and the "imperialist bourgeoisie".

They did not deal with the programmatic and practical consequences of this distinction. Lora's policies in the 1970-71 revolutionary crisis in Bolivia represented a continuation of the same fatal opportunist positions he had developed in 1952. Once again, he gave critical support to a left nationalist government, used the united front tactic in an opportunist manner and, as a result, failed

to organise the workers and peasants to seize power.

This time there could be no excuse about the influence of the "Pabloites". The Bolivian supporters of the USFI had formed their own separate organisation, POR (Gonzales), which was pursuing an equally disastrous policy for the Bolivian working class, through its concentration on guerrilla struggle as a road to socialist revolution.

The revolutionary situation opened in October 1970 when Regelio Miranda's military coup against General Ovando's government was thwarted by a massive general strike called by the Bolivian Trade Union Centre (COB). Armed workers controlled the capital, La Paz, and a "Comando Politico" was formed by the trade unions and various left political parties.

Both the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB) and the POR(Lora) were important forces within this command. At the same time the "leftist" General Juan Jose Torres declared himself in rebellion against both Miranda and Ovando.

What should a revolutionary party have done in a situation where the army was so divided and fearful of the masses that it was forced to put forward its most "leftist" figure at the head of the struggle? Within the Political Command it would have argued for the workers and peasant~ to take the power. As a result it would have fought for a call for every factory, mine and workplace to elect delegates to local soviets and to a national soviet, convened by the Political Command. It would have called on the workers to form their own committees and (or the formation of soldiers' committees in the army, these to send delegates to the soviets. It would have fought for a workers' and peasants' government directly accountable to the soviets, in order to open the road to the formation of a proletarian state.

Recognising the strength of the nationalist parties and groups, the overwhelming weight of the peasantry in Bolivia, and the history of suppression of democratic rights, it would have been in favour of the convening of a Constituent Assembly under the most democratic conditions.

Measured against these tasks the POR (Lora) miserably failed its second test. In discussions between the Political Command and Torres, POR supported the entry of "worker ministers" into the Torres government. Lora makes this clear in his own description of events:

"But the opportunist tendency was brought under control since the Comando Politico was persuaded (by the POR? . Eds) to attach such conditions for accepting the ministries that they would have been effectively removed from the control of the President. Thus the ministers would be appointed by the Comando, which would mandate them and could recall them at any time; a political advisor would work alongside each minister etc. However this experiment was never put to the test, since Torres withdrew his offer" 06, This interesting "experiment" as Lora chooses to call it, was nothing new at all. It was no more than an agreement to enter a bourgeois government and was no different from the Menshevik entry into the Russian Provisional Government; and this after the experience of "worker ministers" in 1952!

The Political Command effectively ceded power after the aborted negotiations on "power sharing". POR posed no alternative to this. In fact there is evidence that the POR did little to challenge the illusions of the Bolivian masses in the left Bonapartist Torres. As in 1952, the POR confused the defence of a government against the threat of a right wing coup, with giving political support to such a government, through the creation of worker ministers.

Lora expected the "force of events" to compel Torres to arm the workers. This he makes clear when he declares "Everyone (including the POR? Eds) supposed that Torres, a friend of Ovando, would in view of the difficult situation he confronted have no alternative but to arm the people, as the only way to strengthen his own position. But as time passed the hope grew fainter and fainter that a clash between opposing sectors of the military would enable the masses to arm themselves".! 7

Instead of fighting for a workers' and peasants' government based on soviets, the POR showed a fatal reliance on left Bonapartism. As the quote above shows, Lora and the POR were waiting for a clash in the army between "progressive" and "reactionary" forces, rather than raising slogans for the

arming of the workers and the organisation of the soldiers for a sharp clash with Torres. By the time the POR came to the conclusion that Torres was not going to fight or arm the workers, it was too late.

In January 1971, the right wing struck back and attempted to overthrow Torres. The move deepened the revolutionary crisis in Bolivia.

The plot was discovered and massive mobilisations culminated in miners, armed with dynamite, virtually occupying La Pal.

In the face of the right wing threat, the "Popular Assembly" was formed on the initiative of Comando Politico. The Assembly was a hybrid body. It was a proto-soviet which could have been transformed, under the correct political leadership, into a real leading soviet based on La Pal. A majority of its delegates represented workers' organisations (132, or 60%). A further 23 came from the Independent Peasants Confederation. A large block of delegates (53) were allocated to petit bourgeois elements such as professionals, teachers, students, etc.

As the name "Popular Assembly" implies, the forces of the Bolivian left saw the Assembly as representative of an anti-imperialist united front. The Stalinist PCB wanted to build it as a popular front on the Chilean model in order to mobilise support for Torres. The POR(Lora) saw it as part of a "Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Front", but at the same time declared it an organ of "dual power and soviet type organisation, which has made for the predominance of the proletariat in the revolutionary process".¹⁰ Whether the Popular Assembly actually became a "soviet type" body depended on how the revolutionary forces within it fought to build it.

Again there is no evidence that Lora's POR fought to turn the Assembly into a leading soviet in Bolivia. At the same time, their line on the Torres regime remained the same, with the POR even opposing the slogan "All Power to the Popular Assembly".

Revolutionaries would have fought for the Assembly to be transformed into a real soviet, and for all delegates to be elected by rank and file factory and workplace committees (many delegates were elected by the trade union leaderships). They would have called for the construction of soldiers' committees, and for them to send delegates to the workers' 'councils. They would have supported all land seizures and occupations, and called for the building of committees of poor peasants. They would have raised the slogan "All Power to the Popular Assembly" and counterposed the call for a "Workers' and Peasants' Government" to the Bonapartist regime of Torres. Above all, they would have fought for the arming of the workers, and the formation of a workers' militia.

This was not the perspective of the POR(Lora). On the 19th August the army struck back, led by General Banzer and backed by the Brazilian government. As late as the 23rd August, the Comando Politico and the POR were still pleading for arms from Torres: "That night discussions in the Comando Politico revolved entirely around the problems of arms. Torres and his ministers had promised time and again that they would, if the need arose give arms to the people...the Comando resolved to send one last commission composed of Lechin, myself (Lora -Eds), Mercado, Lopez, Reyes and led to the Presidential palace.

We were to inform the President that if he failed to keep his promise and hand over the arms, the Popular Assembly would take action into its own hands".¹⁰⁹ This with the rightist forces already in control of several centres!

The results were predictable. Torres refused to give arms on the ground that it would split the army, and troops moved on La Pal. Despite heroic resistance from poorly armed workers and students in La Pal, the military crushed all resistance, ushering in a period of black reaction in Bolivia.

As a leading force within the Bolivian working class, the POR (Lora) has to bear a major responsibility for the crushing defeat inflicted on the Bolivian masses. Lora has yet to make one self-criticism of the policies pursued in 1970/71. Worse still, having learned nothing after the coup, the POR proceeded to form in exile another of their "Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Fronts" (the FRA). This popular front included not only the pro-Moscow and pro-Chinese CPs, and both the

PORs, but also the MIR (a petit-bourgeois guerrillaist group) and General Torres.

The FRA, which within its ranks bound all organisations to the "fundamental line of the founding documents", declared in its Manifesto:

"the need is undeniably to build a fighting unity of all the revolutionary, democratic, and progressive forces so that the great battle can be begun in conditions offering a real perspective for a popular and national government". 110

The FIT has never examined, let alone criticised, the opportunist record of the POR. Neither has it carried out a proper critical evaluation of its own past in the OCRFI. They regard the OCRFI (and before it the IC) as the guardian of the Trotskyist programme up until the end of 1978/beginning of 1979, when *Politica Obrera* was expelled from the OCRFI. The founding document of the FIT, issued after the founding conference in April 1979, makes this loyalty to the OCRFI clear.

Denouncing the fusion manoeuvres between the OCRFI and the USFI the FIT say of the OCRFI: "We denounce this as a shameful capitulation on the part of those who, up until yesterday were raising the banner of struggle against revisionist Pabloism." 11. This banner was, in fact, a tattered and centrist one. The OCRFI was founded in July 1972 on a federalist, revisionist basis. In the Stalinist states and the imperialised countries the OCRFI advocated a purely democratic rather than a clear transitional programme. This liquidation was, and is, covered up by endless references to the correctness of the theory of Permanent Revolution. According to the OCRFI the national bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracies were incapable under all circumstances, of establishing or co-existing with bourgeois democracy.

For the OCRFI therefore the fight for Permanent Revolution is reduced to a fight for bourgeois democracy against the bourgeoisie and bureaucracy. This twaddle is a travesty of Trotsky's theory which advocates democratic demands within the context of a clear programme for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The OCRFI, and it would seem the FIT, advance a democratic programme as their goal.

Thus on Palestine, the founding documents of the OCRFI advanced not the call for a Workers' Republic of Palestine but merely argue that a 'Constituent Assembly of Palestine is a necessary condition for the struggle against reactionary Zionism and the no less reactionary concept of the Arab nation." 112

This position is in fact still held by the FIT, through its Palestinian group the Workers' League of Palestine, who advocate a "democratic and secular state in Palestine". Thus they set in advance a democratic outcome for revolutionary struggle in Palestine as a "stage" on the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The corollary of the OCRFI's democratism was its strategic view of the united front. This manifests itself in the FIT in their strategic conception of the anti-imperialist united front, evidenced particularly in the politics of the POR.

The FIT does claim to have waged a struggle within the OCRFI against Lambert's OCI. Certainly there was a dispute in 1978 over work in the Argentinian unions. *Politica Obrera* were correct, against Lambert, in recognising that despite Videla's coup, these unions remained workers' organisations and not fascist unions. Indeed this was the issue that led to the split in the OCRFI. However apart from this issue we have, as yet, come across no evidence to support the view that the FIT groupings had advanced a revolutionary critique of the OCRFI. To this day they have not renounced the revisionist founding documents of the OCRFI. Indeed many of their positions represent a political continuity with this tradition. Furthermore like the OCRFI, the FIT appears to adhere to a non-democratic centralist and federalist basis for their international tendency.

The FIT do, correctly, reject the term "world Trotskyist movement" as a meaningful political label. However, in its place they have erected a theory that the USFI is, in fact, counter-revolutionary. Their founding document states: "If the OCRFI has ceased to be the channel by which the party of world revolution may be constructed, the ill-named United Secretariat has already moved over to

the camp of the class enemy and has abandoned the Trotskyist programme." 113

Like all of the other fragments, the FIT shy away from calling things by their right name. Yes, the USFI have abandoned the Trotskyist programme. Yes, indeed, the sections of the USFI, as the case of the LSSP showed, can go over to the camp of the class enemy. However to classify the USFI as a world organisation as "counter-revolutionary" is to totally misunderstand its nature. The USFI remains centrist and capable of vacillations to both left and right.

To characterise it as counter-revolutionary is to say in advance that in all revolutionary crises and class struggle situations it will as a whole side with the class enemy against the working class. This puts it in the same camp as the Stalinists and reformists and says in advance that they will act as the Social Democrats in Germany did in 1918/19 or as the Stalinists did in Spain in 1936/7. To say as we do, that the centrist vacillations and programme of the USFI help to disarm the working class and can in periods of revolutionary crisis therefore objectively aid the counterrevolution is one thing. But to label the USFI as counter-revolutionary is quite another. It might make FIT militants feel better or be used as a block to any section moving too close to the USFI but it is politically incorrect and will tactically disarm FIT militants in relation to centrism.

In common with all of the major currents that we have discussed the FIT militants do not have a dialectical grasp of the character and meaning of centrism.

While our assessments of the FIT's positions have necessarily a provisional character we believe the FIT have adopted a number of centrist positions which we think flow from their failure to break from the politics of the OCRFI.

On the Nicaraguan revolution the FIT was clear that the FSLN did not represent the proletariat's own revolutionary party. They castigated the USFI, quite rightly, for its liquidationism and capitulation to the FSLN. They raised the call on the workers' organisations to break with the bourgeoisie and for a workers' and peasants' government. However in their July 1979 statement on Nicaragua, at a time when the revolution was nearing its climax, the FIT lapsed into the democratism that had characterised the OCRFI. Thus, their central slogan was: "Against the tendency of the bourgeois leadership to build a government for reconstructing the state and to put off indefinitely the expression of popular sovereignty, the FIT calls for the convocation of a sovereign and democratic constituent assembly as being the form of the further development of political democratic aspirations and, in the end to expose the democratic demagoguery of the bourgeoisie. For the FIT it is a question of a policy of transition which is part of the strategy of proletarian revolution." 114

The problem with this formulation is twofold. The idea that the Constituent Assembly is a "policy of transition" implies that it is a necessary stage for the Nicaraguan revolution to pass through. While we would have agreed with the call for a Constituent Assembly we would not (and did not) pose it as a necessary, transitional stage. This points to the second problem in the FIT's slogan and its use. Who do they address their call for an Assembly to? There is no mention in their statement of the need to build soviets of workers and peasants, as the only force that could guarantee the convocation of an assembly. There is no mention of the fact that such soviets could supercede the democracy of an Assembly and be the only force that could lay the basis for the transition to a proletarian state.

This omission also leaves the FIT's call for a workers' and peasants' government abstract. What is such a government to be based on, soviets or the Constituent Assembly? We do not propose counterposing the call for soviets to the call for an Assembly. In the context of the crumbling Somoza regime and the Sandinista revolution this would amount to equally abstract ultimatism. We do argue, however, that it was necessary to make clear how the struggle for soviets could be combined with the struggle around democratic demands thus making concrete the strategy of Permanent Revolution.

The failure to pose the question of the Constituent Assembly and soviets in this fashion was, in our view, to follow the dangerous path of turning the tactical slogan of the Constituent Assembly into a

strategy.

It appeared to address only the FSLN and not the masses. It failed to warn that without soviets there could be no guarantee of an Assembly being convoked. Indeed this has been proven by the course of the Nicaraguan revolution.

On the whole question of soviets and what they are, the FIT is in our view, confused. This was apparent in their position on Poland and Jaruzelski's coup d'etat. The FIT argued that the trade union Solidarnosc was a developing soviet: "By its own organic law of development, the movement which erupted in August 1980, has broken all possibility of national accord. The FIT has shown how Solidarity has more and more taken on the character of a soviet.

Starting from immediate demands, the workers' organisations were transformed into a veritable independent power, opposed to the state power and with a growing influence in other strata of the population." 115

The logic of this position expressed itself in the FIT's call for "Solidarnosc to Power." This position is wrong, and the characterisation of Solidarnosc as a soviet-type body is at odds with reality. The inter-factory strike committees (MKS) that were thrown up in August 1980 were the potential embryos of soviets. They were replaced by Solidarnosc which was clearly a trade union, not a soviet, organisation. Solidarnosc's structure and methods of decision making, local organisations etc., were not of the soviet type. Therefore to call for "Solidarnosc to Power" is in no way analogous to "All power to the Soviets".

Worse, the call for "Solidarnosc to Power" is premised on an incorrect estimate of the leadership of Solidarnosc. If the fault of the iSt was that it equated the movement with the leadership, then the fault of the FIT was that it equated the leadership with the movement. It failed to recognise that the dominant factions within the leadership advocated programmes that were either directly or indirectly restorationist.

The call for "Solidarnosc to Power" must mean the call for the implementation of its leadership's programme. But, if implemented, the programme of the Solidarnosc leadership would have strengthened the forces of capitalist restoration in Poland. We do not advocate that restorationists take the political power from the Stalinists or that the working class should struggle to make this possible. The introduction of the programme of Walesa, Kuron etc., would not represent a gain for the proletariat but would have meant the implementation of measures directly counterposed to the programme of political revolution and the transition to socialism. In our view, therefore, the FIT's advocacy of such a slogan ~represents a serious error on the part of that tendency.

The unreputed legacy of the OCRFI, the centrist record of Lora's POR, the federalist conception of an international tendency and the positions on Nicaragua and Poland lead us to regard the FIT as no alternative to the principal tendencies of the degenerated Trotskyist movement.

An international tendency based on such a record and such politics is unlikely to be able to grapple with the programmatic questions that need to be resolved in the struggle to rebuild an International. Whether or not constituent organisations within the FIT, such as Politica Obrera of Argentina, can be won away from the FIT's methods remains to be seen. Certainly their willingness to debate serious issues of programme with other tendencies, including ourselves, makes this a possibility. But such discussions, if they are to move forward, must eschew the diplomacy and manoeuvring that characterised, for example, the Parity Commission 'discussions., For our part we intend to press for such honest political discussions with groupings within the FIT such as Politica Obrera.

Not long after the formation of the FIT the OCRFI was busy playing master of ceremonies in yet another unprincipled attempt to "reconstruct" the Fourth International. The USFI's blatant liquidation of party and programme in Nicaragua in 1979 and its connivance in having the "Trotskyist" Simon Bolivar Brigade expelled from Nicaragua, was a dramatic confirmation of the lengths to which these centrists will go in their accommodation to petit-bourgeois nationalist groupings. Their positions conflicted with those of the Bolshevik Faction which, together with the L TT, split from the USFI on the eve of the 1979 World Congress. This split, which was led by the

BF's major party, the Argentinian PST led by Nahuel Moreno, undermined the USFI's ludicrous claim to represent the Fourth International. Immediately following their split the BF and the LTT majority joined forces with Pierre Lambert's Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International.

Having won such a prize Lambert unceremoniously wound up the unity discussions that he had been having with the USFI - without of course providing any political accounting of his move! Together Moreno and Lambert launched the Parity Committee (Commission). Its expressed aim was to call an open conference of "the world Trotskyist movement" aimed at "rooting out revisionism" through a "democratically organised and exhaustive discussion". In the event no open conference took place. Workers Power, the Irish Workers Group and other tendencies that applied to attend this mythical conference were effectively barred from what became a "unity" congress between the Morenoites and Lambertists in December 1980. This conference produced yet another misbegotten parody of Trotsky's FI - the Fourth International (International Committee.)

It was precisely in such a period of flux and disorientation amongst (subjectively) revolutionary militants that it was necessary for communists to be absolutely clear about the nature of the split and the history and direction of the component parts of the Parity Committee.

To do otherwise, despite the apparent left criticism of the USFI by the Morenoites, would have sown illusions in the Committee and its constituent organisations.

Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group pointed to the record of the two major groups - the OCRFI and the Morenoites. We catalogued the deeply opportunist politics of Moreno and his organisations their history of adaptation to Peronism, Castroism and even Maoism.

We pointed to the fact that the OCRFI offered only a stagist democratic programme for the Nicaraguan masses, in line with their constant refusal to distinguish between democratic and socialist demands. We were clear that such an amalgam forming an international tendency with the declared aim of reconstructing the Fourth International could "have no common programme which can be applied in a revolutionary situation." 116 Having done this we did not ignore the proposed "open conference", but applied to attend it in order to argue our positions at it. Needless to say these many-times-over opportunists were not interested in the prospect of such an honest and searching discussion.

The sorry history of the Parity Committee/Fourth International (IC) demonstrated that our criticisms of the forces involved retained all their validity. The Parity Committee itself was marked by the Stalinophobic views of the OCRFI, hailing the imperialist-backed Islamic rebels in Afghanistan as vanguard fighters in "the development of the proletarian revolution in the whole area." 117

The declarations of the Committee centred exclusively on areas of general agreement between the participants, brushing under the table former slight disagreements (such as over the class character of Cuba). Not surprisingly when declarations were made on key issues of the class struggle they remained general, vague and entirely insufficient as guides to action.

This exercise reached its peak with the formation of the FI(IC). The OCRFI who had formerly claimed criticism of Moreno for his adaptation to Peronism was an "indispensible task" for Trotskyists, brushed this reservation aside when the leader of its largest section (the French OCT) Pierre Lambert, declared of the formation of the FI(IC): "The only comparable advance in the history of the world's workers' movement is the one that led to the formation of the Third International after the victory of the Russian Revolution." 118

This bombast could not long conceal the politically flimsy basis of the FI(IC). The "Forty Theses" of the FI(IC) were marked by centrist evasions or generalities. They did not in any way account for or explain the differences on Peronism, Cuba and Portugal that had formerly divided Moreno and Lambert. They destroyed the possibility of agreement over perspectives by substituting windy generalisations about the imminence of revolution and the continuity of the world revolution since 1945. The depth of opportunism to which the FI(IC) was prepared to sink was revealed by the Theses' attitude to trade unions in Argentina.

While the OCI's characterisation of the Argentinian unions as "fascist" was important enough to use as a pretext to expel Política Obrera from the OCRFI in 1978, the accommodation by the Morenoites to work in these very same unions was swallowed with consummate ease: "But the discussion whether we can transform these organisations or have to create others is a wasted discussion which will be solved by history." 119 At the time of its foundation we argued that such an unprincipled basis for the fusion would inevitably produce new splits and further disorientation of subjectively revolutionary militants trapped in these bankrupt groups: "The formation of the FI(IC) merely lays the basis for new splits in the future." 120 Within a year we were proved right.

In the summer of 1981 Moreno suddenly "discovered" that on the question of the Mitterrand Government "We have differences of 180 degrees." 121 Moreno claimed that he wrote to Lambert on July 13th describing the French Section's orientation towards the Mitterrand Government as being one of "critical support" for a Popular Front:

"The leadership of the OCI(u) does not dare to put a name to its policy but it accords uncritical and almost total support to a popular front government." 122

A reading of the OCI(u)'s paper "Informations Ouvrieres" from May to September 1981 reveals that this is a justified criticism. But nothing in the OCI's past record of adaptation to social democracy could have led one to expect any other response. Since serious programmatic differences had not been discussed openly before the FI(IC) was founded it was unlikely that Lambert would do so after fusion had been achieved.

Doubtless Moreno, a seasoned and cynical factionalist, knew this very well. Indeed, Moreno's supporters within the OCI(u) had supported Lambert's adaptation to social democracy, which existed before the May 1981 Presidential election. This took the form, for example, of the OCI(u) refusing to stand its own candidate (in case it took votes away from Mitterrand) and calling for a vote for Mitterrand (in preference to the Stalinist candidate, Marchais) from round one of this (two round) election.

When on September 22nd 1981 Moreno submitted a long article attacking the OCI's position on Mitterrand, for publication in Correspondence Internationale, it was tantamount to a declaration of a split. Events thereafter took on a familiar ring to those who have experienced or studied the splits and fusions of the "Fourth Internationals" since 1953.

Lambert began to level accusations at supporters of Moreno in France that they were involved in a Stalinist, LCR, fascist, Morenoite provocation against the OCI Napuri, a leader of the Peruvian tendency that had been part of the OCRFI, the POMR, was expelled and denounced as a bourgeois agent- because he opposed the expulsions of the Morenoites. This method of denunciation is an old tactic. Enemies are bourgeois agents.

They need to be dealt with organisationally not politically. As a result of these moves the Morenoites boycotted a General Council of the FI(IC) in the Autumn of 1981 whereupon Lambert declared that they had therefore split. Moreno then decamped to form the International Workers League, having achieved a foothold in Europe.

We confidently predict that this organisation will tread the opportunist path already pioneered by its leader. For Lambert the exercise was not too rewarding. However despite a steady loss of members the OCI have changed their name to the PCI - Parti Communiste Internationaliste declaring themselves a party. They have continued their adaptationist approach to Mitterrand and in Poland put forward a purely democratic programme for political revolution. At a meeting on 21-23 December 1981 with the rump of the OCRFI this farce was continued with the declaration of the "Fourth International - International Centre of Reconstruction" !

The whole episode reveals the degenerate nature of both elements in the split. They are both led by centrists who continue to constitute road blocks to the building of a revolutionary International and the reelaboration of a revolutionary programme.

The Trotskyist International Liason Committee (TILC) formed at the end of 1979 represents an

attempt by the WSL (Workers Socialist League) in Britain and various other groups in Italy, the USA and Denmark to form an international tendency aiming to "reconstruct the Fourth International". Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group attended the international pre-conference of the TILC in December 1979 as observers. At that meeting our groupings expressed disagreement with the basis and method on which the TILC was initiated. The WSL, the largest organisation and the main political influence within the TILC, originated out of a factional struggle in the Healyite Workers Revolutionary Party, British section of the International Committee. Crystallised around the evident gap between the WRP's perspectives - economic collapse and imminent military coup - and the real state of the class struggle the central theme of the opposition was the call for a "return to the transitional programme." 123

In the formative period during and immediately after the split in the WRP, the leaders of the WSL were considerably influenced by the OCI!

In particular they adopted the OCI's fetishistic use of the Transitional Programme as the highest possible and entirely sufficient formulation of communist principles. They added to this a home grown view of the "fight for the transitional programme" which was largely posed in terms of resolutions on the sliding scale of wages to trade union conferences.

Thus the WSL conducted propaganda for those transitional demands which were closest to the current wage struggle.

On the Labour Party they adopted wholesale the old methods and slogans of the Socialist Labour League including a version of Healy's "Make the left MPs fight", cut down to "Make the Lefts fight". This slogan presented itself as a sharply polemical exposure of the lefts with calls on them to kick out the right-wing leaders. It had however beneath its "left" appearance a right adaptationist essence. Was this an inevitable stage; first the left reformists, then our turn? Was there a fundamental difference between the "left" and "right" social democratic leaders? The WSL privately said "no" and that this was "proved" by the MP's refusal to fight. But what if the left leaders did "fight"? What if they even moved to kick out Healy and the right wing? In 1980/81 Benn and a small nucleus of left MPs put themselves at the head of the Labour Party Democracy movement. The WSL criticism of them weakened and collapsed. Simultaneously they fused their organisation with the ever more opportunist I-CL. The old slogan has not been raised by the new organisation despite the retreat of Benn and Co and their manifest failure to carry their "fight" to a decisive conclusion. 54. Whilst the WSL rejected the WRP's early '70s sectarianism it returned to all the fundamentals that had led it in that direction. Their work was conducted in the old 1960s Healy style.

As the "alternative leadership" the WSL was built as a miniature version of a future mass party (mini-mass party). The WSL indignantly rejected the role and tasks of a fighting propaganda group. Consequently it developed all the classic faults of 1960s Healyism - a rapid turnover of members, a low level of cadre training and development, and inflated expectations that led to demoralisation and collapse. Raided twice by the Spartacist sectarians who took off their "left" elements the demoralised WSL collapsed into a fusion with the right-centrist I-CL in 1981.

The WSL's sponsorship and foundation of TILC was a product of its declining years. In essence the WSL failed to break from the IC's fetishisation of the Transitional Programme and their turning of it into abstract principles - i.e. dogma. This approach necessarily separates programmatic principles from tactics, and directs attention away from the tasks of programmatic re-elaboration. This in effect denies both the programmatic degeneration of the FI and its collapse into centrism.

Thus the WSL argued in March 1978 that the route to building a principled basis for a reconstructed FI lay not in: "the arithmetical piecing together of the existing splintered fragments, but as a process of reaffirming both in theory and practice the fundamental principles on which the Fourth International was founded." 124 All groupings which claim to stand on the "principles" of the Transitional Programme are therefore part of a "world Trotskyist Movement" and simply have to be won back to an existing fundamentally correct programme.

The WSL's original conception of the Transitional Programme as "valid today" has done nothing to

prevent it from sinking into an opportunist quagmire on its own national terrain. Small wonder that this understanding of programme is incapable of guiding the creation of an international tendency.

The collapse of the Fourth International is seen simply as a period of "prolonged disorientation."¹²⁵ Here the WSL has recourse to some crude sociology. The leaders of the post-war FI were unfortunately petit-bourgeois and therefore incapable of defending the revolutionary programme. This is most clearly expressed in the WSL's submission to the XI World Congress of the USFI, "The Poisoned Well". It describes "Pabloism" thus: "It reflects the ideological approach of the petit bourgeoisie,"¹²⁶

Fair enough. But then it continues: "The danger of such a method emerging remains acute whenever (and for whatever reasons) Trotskyism becomes dependent for its existence upon middle class intellectual forces with little experience and few links to the working class- forced to contemplate the class struggle from the outside, and more than ever dependent upon an analysis which finds it difficult to penetrate beneath the surface of events,"¹²⁷

Now while it is true that a revolutionary organisation needs to become in class composition as well as in political character, a party of the proletarian vanguard, it is not true that the failure to do this was decisive in the FI's collapse. Whilst Pablo and Mandel were the principal theorists, the "proletarian" leaders Healy and Cannon were equally complicit in its practice. One group that blocked with Pablo, the Cochran Clarke faction, had a large proletarian base. The real problem with this one-sided sociological analysis is that it leads the WSL to defend the IC tradition. It does this on the spurious grounds that the IC maintained a working class orientation. But then so did the LSSP in Ceylon, yet it joined a popular front. So did Lora in Bolivia, yet in two revolutionary situations he took a Menshevik not a Bolshevik position. To make a fundamental distinction between the IS and the IC on the basis of a supposed working class rather than a petit-bourgeois orientation, is at bottom an apolitical way of viewing the split in the FI and the nature of the IC.

We reject the WSL's view, built into the founding document of the TILC that: "We critically defend these forces - initially in the International committee - that took, however partially and inadequately, a stand in defence of the primacy of the task of constructing independent Trotskyist parties as the sole guarantor of the political independence of the working class."¹²⁸ Neither politically nor organisationally is it true that the IC groups maintained "independence". Was Healy's anonymous club selling Tribune defending proletarian independence? The TILC was founded on the notion: today we have "The Programme" - the task is to win the Trotskyist movement back to it. This approach leads to a false conception of the operative basis for unity, regroupment and fusion, both nationally and internationally.

The basis for unity becomes generalised abstract principles rather than agreement on programme, tactics, strategy and perspectives. This approach was mirrored in the positions of the GBL (now LOR) of Italy. In their "Theses on the Crisis of the Fourth International and the tasks of the Bolshevik Leninists" (Nov. 1979) and drawn up for the TILC pre-conference, the GBL put forward a similar view of the "world trotskyist movement". Thus they argue: "The FI is not dead, nor was it destroyed. It underwent a political degeneration process, leading to organisational scattering. Today it lives in its different factions."¹²⁹

The GBL proceeds to define why the tradition of the FI still "lives" in this world Trotskyist movement: "Firstly they do cluster the most conscious portion of (the) world proletarian vanguard. The politics is generally centrist in nature but with special features. Actually it still does not reflect a complete break from the programmatic basis of Bolshevism - even less does it constitute a direct reflection of social forces foreign to the proletariat (worker aristocracy, Stalinist parasitic bureaucracy, petit-bourgeois intelligentsia and so on) unlike Stalinist, social democratic and partly also centrist politics."¹³⁰

As well as talking of centrism "with special features", the document also frequently characterises the FI fragments as "centrist type" organisations. In fact the GBL (LOR)'s position is just a repetition of Roberto Masari's "centrism sui generis" - a form of centrism which is somehow incapable of going over to reformism. Firstly, there is no evidence to support this rosy prediction.

Indeed the GBL itself excludes the LSSP and the Posadists from the "world Trotskyist movement" because they "definitively entered the counter-revolutionary camp". What is to stop other centrist fragments following? Secondly, it is a mistake to argue that the centrism of the FI fragments is "special" because it does not "constitute a direct reflection of social forces foreign to the proletariat".

All centrism precisely reflects the social weight of the petit-bourgeoisie, a stratum which vacillates between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Since the labour aristocracy in the imperialist countries has, due to its sharing in the feast of super profits, the life conditions of a comfortable petit-bourgeois, such consciousness is not (as the WSL theoreticians like to think) limited to shop-keepers or people with a college education.

The history of the FI after 1948 is the history of capitulation to these forces, either to the petit-bourgeois utopian programmes of the Stalinists - e.g. the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties, or to petit-bourgeois nationalists - e.g. Algeria, Nicaragua. The suggestion that these antics and betrayals do not represent a "complete break from the programme of Bolshevism" is to besmirch the programme of Lenin and Trotsky.

From this misunderstanding of centrism, the LOR and WSL have developed a set of tactics to relate to the "world Trotskyist movement" through "regenerating" it, all of which are fundamentally wrong. TILC is seen as relating to this world movement in the manner of an "orthodox" international faction of it. An analogy is made with the struggle of the International Left Opposition: "It is necessary instead to engage (in) a struggle for regeneration and Bolshevik reorganising of the FI, similar to the struggle of the Left Opposition 1929-33".¹³¹

This analogy is a false one. Trotsky and the ILO related to the Communist International in this way because it represented the mass vanguard party of the proletariat. In no sense do any of the fragments of the FI represent this. They are not mass organisations anywhere in the world, neither do they encompass the proletarian vanguard in the obvious sense that the CI did between 1923-33. Of course, important numbers of subjectively revolutionary militants are attracted by these groups (as they are to other centrist groups defined by the WSL as outside the "Trotskyist movement" - the PRP in Portugal, Avanguardia Operaia and Lotta Continua in Italy in the mid 1970s, and the SWP in Britain, for example). This may make an orientation to such groups essential. This necessitates polemic, theoretical debate, united action etc.

However, to be principled it must be on the basis of a clear recognition of their centrist character. In contrast the -TILC sees itself as a faction of this "movement", sometimes inside it, sometimes outside it, desperately trying to bring it together in "open conferences" and willing to diplomatically tailor its criticisms to do so.

Two conditions govern a communist approach to centrist organisations. Firstly, in what direction is a centrist current moving - to the left or the right? Trotsky was absolutely clear about this in his advice to the British section of the ILO to enter the leftward moving centrist Independent Labour Party: "Centrism as we have said more than once, is a general name for the most varied tendencies and groupings spread out between reformism and Marxism. In front of each centrist grouping it is necessary to place an arrow indicating the direction of its development; from right to left or from left to right".¹³²

Of course communists would orient to, even enter, leftward moving centrist groups, attempting to bring them to a fully communist position as Trotsky did with the Block of Four. But this method does not inform the TILC method of relating to the FI fragments. The TILC prefers to relate to the "whole movement" and proceeds to do so either on the basis that it is not centrist (WSL), or that it is centrism with "special features" (GBL LOR).

The second condition which determines a communist organisation's ability to relate to centrism is a firm grasp of, and determination to fight for, its own programme. Without a clearly worked-out programme which guides strategy and tactics in a democratic centralist fashion, an international tendency is disarmed in the face of centrism. Again, when Trotsky was discussing the question with

the British LO, he emphasised that the ILO criticised the Walcher-Frolich group not for entering the left centrist SAP, but "because they had entered it without a complete programme and without an organ of their own...The great advantage of the Left Opposition lies in the fact that it has a theoretically elaborated programme, international experience and international control".¹³³

The great "disadvantage" of the TILC is that it has none of these things, but could still found itself on the perspective of entering centrist organisations. In these circumstances this was nothing short of a liquidationists' charter. In fact its founding "programme" was inadequate even to guide or hold its own tendency together, let alone enter combat with much larger centrist formations.

The founding document of the TILC - "The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle" explicitly confines itself to "revolutionary principles", leaving the tactical application of these principles by the

[...]

For the TILC, what crucially separates these tendencies from centrism is their formal adherence to the Transitional Programme. The TILC declaration of intent speaks of this world movement "oscillating around the Trotskyist programme" ¹³⁷ . In saying this the TILC is in fact covering over the real nature of these organisations and their leaderships. They are failing in the elementary Marxist duty hammered home by Trotsky in his struggle against the centrists "to say what is".

Motivated by a healthy desire to relate to the "militants who aspire to be, and regard themselves as revolutionary Marxists" the TILC will end by making concession after concession to the unhealthy desire to be involved in discussions of the "world movement" at the cost of putting aside their criticisms. We know of course that the only basis that the gentlemen who lead the USFI, the FI(ICR) and the IWL etc., will allow discussion to take place is the precondition of not calling them centrists.

The dangers of this method were shown by the TILC's attitude to the Moreno Lambert Parity Committee and Open Conference. Clear characterisations of the nature of these tendencies - as inveterate centrists and misleaders of the working class - was replaced by a refusal to be drawn on the political nature of these currents. Instead the TILC's major criticism of these professional tricksters was over their failure to live up to their promises of calling an "open conference".

In this way TILC sacrificed its political criticisms, and along with them the necessity of issuing warnings to militants following the Parity Committee down the same old centrist cul-de-sac, in the interests of holding a "discussion" with part of the "world movement." These developments in the short life span of the TILC have confirmed the criticisms made by the IWG and Workers Power at the TILC preconference in 1979. The TILC, founded on a wrong method and without having established real programmatic unity, has proved incapable of surmounting its first major international test - an imperialist war against a semi-colony.

It remains to be seen whether the sections of the TILC will draw the necessary conclusions from this debacle and break from this fundamentally centrist method. For our part we will continue to debate issues with the TILC, try to help its sections to break from that method, but we will do so by keeping to the forefront our criticisms and disagreements. We do this not out of a fanatical desire to disagree but out of a desire to achieve the sort of 'programmatic clarity that is absolutely necessary for the building of a genuinely democratic centralist Trotskyist international tendency.

FOOTNOTES

91. *ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 54.

92. *ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp. 154-5.

93. J. Lister, *Spartacist Truth Kit* (London, 1982).

94. L. Trotsky, *Writings 1933-34* (New York, 1975), p.233.

95. *Marxist Bulletin* (New York, n.d.) No. 9, p.5.

96. Quoted in Lister, *op.cit.*, p.12.

97. This question is dealt with at greater length in the final section of this book.

98. *Spartacist Britain* No. 47.

99. Spartacist Britain No. 1. 100. Workers Vanguard No. 295.
101. FMR, Self Critical Balance Sheet of the NII (Frankfurt, 1977), 102. The I-CL and the Fourth International (London 1976), p.6.
103. *ibid.*, p. 8.
104. See section on the TILC for a fuller discussion of this fusion.
105. Documents of the Founding Conference of the OCRFI (Dublin, n.d.) p. 11.
106. G. Lora, History of the Bolivian Labour Movement (Cambridge, 1977) p. 363.
107. *ibid.*, p. 362.
108. G. Lora; Programmatic Basis of the POR (English Translation by the Socialist Labour Group, n.d.) p.57.
109. G. Lora, History of the Bolivian Labour Movement *op. cit.* p. 368.
110. "Manifesto of Bolivian Front Against the Dictatorship" in Intercontinental Press (New York, December 6th 1971) p. 1078.
111. Declaration of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (Lima, 1979) (Our translation).
112. Documents of the Founding Conference of the OCRFI *op. cit.*, p. 17.
113. Declaration of the FIT *op. cit.*
114. Declaration of the FIT on Nicaragua (La Paz, 1979) (Our translation).
115. Pour la Defense et le Soutien du Proletariat Polonais!! (Paris, 1'981) - this was published by European based militants of the FIT. (Our translation).
116. Workers Power No. 17 and Class Struggle No.7.
117. International Correspondence No. 1.
118. Quoted in International Marxist Review (London, Spring 1982), p.54.
119. Draft Theses for the Reorganisation (Reconstruction) of the Fourth International, Thesis 31.
120. For a more detailed critique of the "Forty Theses" see Workers Power No.22.
121. Correspondance Internationale, No. 14 p.10.
122. *ibid.*, p. 11.
123. Workers Socialist League, The Battle for Trotskyism, (London, 1979)
124. Trotskyism Today No.2 p.1. 125. Trotskyism Today No.3 p.28.
126. Workers Socialist League The Poisoned Well (London), p.3.
121. *ibid.*
128. Workers Socialist League The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle (London, 1919) ~.21 119. G L, Theses on the Crisis of the Fourth International and the tasks of the Bolshevik Leninists (Genoa, 1979).
130. *ibid.*
131. *ibid.*
132. L. Trotsky, Writings on Britain (London 1974) Vol. 3, p. 87.
133. *ibi.r*, p. 87.
134. Workers Socialist League, The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle *op. cit.*, p.8.
135. L. Trotsky, Writings 1937-38 (New York, 1976), p. 90.
136. Workers Socialist League The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle *op. cit.*, p. 18.
137. TILC International Discussion Bulletin (London, 1980) No.2, p. 16.
138. L. Trotsky, Writings 1930 (New York, 1975), pp. 236-7.
139. L. Trotsky, Writings 1934-35 (New York, 1974) p.278.
140. *ibid.*, p. 274

Part 5.

A radical re-statement of programme is necessary

We have characterised the principal forces who lay claim to Trotskyism as centrist. This term has been abused, distorted or ignored by these forces. As Trotsky said centrists hate to be called by their real name. It is important therefore to understand what centrism is, and how it can be fought.

Historically, centrism has emerged from either Marxism or reformism.

It is a vacillating, transitional phenomenon between the two. Centrism that emerges from Marxism has normally arisen either as a result of serious defeats or prolonged apathy amongst the working class. It reflects both of these things. Thus the centrism of the Second International grew out of the relatively stable years prior to 1905. It maintained a formal Marxist orthodoxy but practiced limited, largely electoralist tactics. The strategy of socialist revolution was relegated to the distant future.

The early centrism of the Comintern (typified by Zinoviev on the left, Stalin in the bureaucratic centre, and Bukharin on the right), arose out of the defeat of the post-war revolutionary upsurge and the bureaucratisation of the revolution. Both of these species of centrism existed for relatively lengthy periods. Their decisive crossing over to the camp of counter-revolution was the end-point of their centrism, an endpoint that genuine Marxists did not passively wait for, but one they fought. The end-point came when these formations were forced to choose the path of revolution or the path of democratic counter revolution. is a petrified centrist current [...] there has been not one, but several centres claiming to be the FI, and that none of them represented revolutionary, programmatic continuity with Trotsky's FI, are doomed to failure. Our approach to building an international is to state-"Programme First". We regard the principal epigone tendencies of the FI (USFI, IC,FI ICR) as definitely centrist.

However, the FI's centrism, whilst sharing the general characteristics of all centrism, has to be seen as distinct in form from the pre-1914 Second International or the pre-1935 Comintern. We call the centrism of the post-war FI petrified centrism that is a centrism which is paradoxically relatively stable, in that it has continued to exist for over 30 years. This form of centrism is not new. Trotsky observed the same phenomenon in the old London Bureau of the 1930s, which included the ILP and which he designated "a petrified centrism without masses" 141.

This centrism is divorced from the masses, and as a result can remain relatively immune to the pressure of the masses during great social upheavals. It can thus constantly postpone making decisive choices.

The Second and Third Internationals were rooted deep within the working class. The Second International came to reflect the privileged social layers of the labour aristocracy and bureaucracy. The Comintern leaders were based upon a privileged social caste within the Soviet Union, with the resources of state power at their disposal. In the last analysis their politics became anchored, through these layers, to the conservative interests of states, capitalist in one case, degenerated workers' state in the other.

The magnetic pull of these counter-revolutionary social forces proved irresistible to the incoherent politics of centrism. The Fourth International movement has never directly rested upon such privileged social forces. In the 1930s and 1940s its cadres were courageous individuals capable of swimming against the tide of fascist, Stalinist and reformist persecution. These cadres came from the ranks of advanced workers and from those intellectuals willing and able to break from their class of origin. In the years 1933-1948 the FI deepened its proletarian roots. This greatly assisted its programmatic firmness.

With the recovery of US and European capitalism and the onset of the cold war the FI sections were increasingly isolated from any revolutionary proletarian forces. The proletariat of the principal imperialist powers sank back into reformism, political apathy, economism. New revolutionary recruits became fewer and fewer. Within the thinning ranks of the Trotskyist groups, conservative

older workers and petit-bourgeois came to predominate. The isolation from the masses sealed the Trotskyists from having to take decisions, yet the social pressure on them was increasingly from a petit-bourgeois milieu and petit-bourgeois movements.

It would be merely vulgar materialism and crude workerism that sought to identify the causes of the FI's degeneration in either its leaders' petit-bourgeois class origins (the SWP leaders' class credentials were impeccable) or in the class composition of its membership, but given the political collapse of the FI into centrism, alien class forces nourished and preserved this. Where the centrist "Trotskyists" had a mass base and where decisive actions were required of them by developments within the class struggle (e.g. the LSSP in Ceylon) right centrism collapsed into open reformism. This petrified centrism is defined by more than just its lack of a mass base. Its programme is a mutation, a hybrid of revolution and reform.

The ILP's distinctiveness was its pacifism but this was embroidered by strong elements of pro-Stalinist positions and concessions to social democracy (e.g. parliamentarianism). In the case of the FI after the war, its "Trotskyism" became increasingly disfigured by Stalinist social democratic or petit-bourgeois nationalist influences. The FI and its fragments have prevented this hotch-potch from being torn apart into its constituent elements because it has never, as an International, been in the leadership of large sections of the working class in pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situations.

In the imperialist countries the predominant drift of this centrism in the 1950s and 1960s was to the right. All the fragments became reconciled to the 'social peace' of the post war boom, politically adapting themselves to the dominant hold of Stalinism or social democracy. Even in the upheavals in the semi-colonies during this period, right opportunism was apparent in the attitude of the fragmented FI to petit-bourgeois nationalism.

Yet centrism would not be centrism if it was incapable of shifts to the left. The Healy grouping in the IC was pushed to the left by forces breaking from the CPGB under the impact of a crisis within Stalinism after Hungary 1956. The anti-war struggles, the general strike in France, the Italian and British strike waves of the late 1960s and early 1970s produced left-centrist turns in the USFI and in various national sects. This 'left' turn was riven with errors and contradictions and soon resulted in a turn back to the right. This in turn produced smaller leftward breakaways, to one of which, in the SWP(GB) we owe our origins. Future sharp turns in the class struggle are likely to generate more such splits. Moreover, we recognise in "left" centrist splits potential recruits to communism. But for that to take place, the banner of communism has to be raised once again as an alternative to the numerous banners of centrism that parade the FI's symbol.

The organisational disintegration of the FI reflects nothing less than the programmatic disintegration of that organisation in the period after the Second World War. The subsequent history of all of the FI's fragments since the early 1950s confirms this analysis to the letter. For this reason we understand the refounding of a revolutionary International in programmatic terms.

For us the task is not to "reunify" or "reconstruct" the FI out of the degenerate fragments of Trotskyism, but rather a task of rallying the best elements within those fragments to a new, unspotted programmatic banner. In the first place this means that genuine Trotskyists must set as their central task the re-elaboration of the Trotskyist programme, refocusing it towards the new period of economic and political crisis that has opened up in the 1970s/80s.

It is precisely this political instability in the world, the hallmark of the epoch of imperialism, the epoch of wars and revolutions, which gives revolutionary strategy and tactics their central importance as guides to action for millions. There is no room for vagueness or ambiguities within such strategies and tactics. We live in a period of dramatic fluctuations in the class struggle where revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situations can rapidly turn into periods of black reaction, as in Chile, Iran, or Turkey for example. Only with a clear programme, that includes precise tactics which flow from and are subordinated to a revolutionary strategy, is it possible to build a revolutionary party and International which can lead the working class to power and defeat the threat of reaction.

There is no brick wall between principles, strategy and tactics. Serious and persistent errors of tactics, which remain uncorrected, inevitably lead to a liquidation of the programme. This was the road along which the post-war FI travelled. All the centrist fragments, the USFI, the Healyites, Lambertists, Morenoites, and national based groups like to claim adherence to the Transitional Programme.

They can do so with impunity because they have turned that programme into abstract principles which do not in any sense guide or inform their strategy and tactics. The Transitional Programme is for them an icon to be brought out every now and then to reassure their followers of their 'continuity' with Trotsky's FI. This explains the collapse of democratic centralism without real programmatic unity. Democratic centralism is replaced in the case of the Healyites and the iSt with bureaucratic centralism (i.e. subordination of the small groups to one large group), and in the case of the USFI and the Lambertists by federalism and the principle of non-interference in the respective national sections' "spheres of influence."

For us, therefore, revolutionary credentials are not valid if they are based on a formal declaration of loyalty to the Transitional Programme. Such formal adherence has, as we have shown, disguised opportunist and sectarian distortions of the programme and the method underlying it. The Transitional Programme was developed on the basis of the whole tradition of revolutionary Marxism. It represented the continuity and development of that tradition since the publication of The Communist Manifesto. Embodying the method of its predecessors it stands on the shoulders of these programmes as a document of enormous historic significance. However, like the work of Marx, Engels and Lenin, whole elements of it were specific, necessarily so, to its immediate period.

Trotsky himself was clear that all programmes are specific to some extent precisely because they are a summation of the general lessons of the preceding period of class struggle and revolutionary thought and practice. Programmes develop a strategy of action for the coming period based on an analysis of the lessons of the preceding period. Writing in 1937 Trotsky reminded his followers of this important rule with regard to revolutionary programmes:

"What other book could even be distantly compared with The Communist Manifesto? But this does not imply that after ninety years of unprecedented development of productive forces and vast social struggles, the Manifesto needs neither corrections nor additions. Revolutionary thought has nothing in common with idol worship. Programme and proposes are tested and corrected in the tight of experience..which is the supreme criterion of human thought. The Manifesto too required...corrections and additions. However, as is evidenced by historical experience itself, these corrections and additions can be successful. Only by proceeding in accord with the method lodged in the foundation of the Manifesto itself." 142

This method guided Marx and Engels themselves. They said of their own "Transitional Programme"

"That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded today. In view of the gigantic strides of Modern Industry in the last twenty five years, and of the accompanying improved and extended party organisation of the working class, in view of the practical experience gained, first in the February revolution, and then, still more, in the Paris Commune, where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole months, this programme has in some respects become antiquated."143

Forty four years after the publication of the Transitional Programme we have to make "corrections and additions" to it, in the same way as Trotsky made "corrections and additions to The Communist Manifesto. We must re-elaborate Trotsky's programme by proceeding according to the method lodged within it. This involves more than just 'bringing the Transitional Programme up to date'.

The Transitional Programme itself was not the complete programme of the FI in two senses.

In the first place it represented the "summation" of the collective work and struggles of the Left Opposition, the ICL and the MFI over 15 years. In these struggles, against Stalinism, social democracy, centrism, fascism, imperialism etc., the Trotskyists developed the programme of the International Tendency in polemics, declarations, resolutions, documents and theses:

"The Left Opposition, therefore, has a colossal experience of an international character. There was not a single important historic event that did not force the Left Opposition to counterpose its slogans and methods to the slogans and methods of the bureaucracy of the Comintern.,144

In the struggles around questions of the Soviet economy, the regime of the CPSU, the Chinese Revolution, the Anglo Russian Committee and later the Spanish revolution, the struggle against fascism and war etc., the Trotskyists hammered out an international organisation based on a common programme and method that was rooted in a common analysis of actual revolutionary events. In this sense, therefore, the Transitional Programme was rooted in agreements over far more than a set of general principles.

Secondly, the Transitional Programme was a focused programme heavily oriented towards providing an action programme for the rapidly developing crisis. It was based on a perspective of immediate war and resultant revolution-"The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International". That is, as with "The Action Programme for France" the programme concentrates heavily on short term perspectives and tasks, without fully analysing epochal developments, such as the changes within world imperialism. Trotsky himself recognised this shortly after drafting the programme he pointed out that not only - the beginning section on modern capitalism in the imperialist epoch not complete but:

"Also the end of the programme is not complete because we don't speak here about the social revolution, about the seizure of power by insurrection, the transformation of capitalist society into the dictatorship, the dictatorship into the socialist society. This brings the reader only to the doorstep. It is a programme for action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution."
145

Thus the programme reflected the necessary turn of the FI towards mass work. This turn was based on the perspective of impending revolutionary upheaval with the FI coming to the head of the masses during the war and the programme becoming the guide to millions. As we have shown this perspective did not materialise, and its failure to do so clearly has programmatic implications. It required of Trotskyists that they test and correct their programme in the light of experience.

In his discussion of the Transitional Programme with the SWP, Trotsky had insisted that the programme was directed towards expected upheaval. He, more than anyone, realised that if this perspective was not realised, a review of the programme would be necessary:

"You can raise the objection that we cannot predict the rhythm and tempo of the development, and that possibly the bourgeoisie will find a political respite. That is not excluded-but then we will be obliged to realise a strategic retreat. But in the present situation we must be oriented for a strategic offensive, not a retreat."⁴⁶ Trotsky's perspective, unlike that of the post-war FI, had an alternate character.

The task of re-elaborating the programme has to start from a recognition that, in the light of world developments since 1945, new lessons and experiences of the class struggle need to be analysed and understood before a new programmatic summation can be made. This is all the more necessary since, unlike the FI in 1938, we do not have an unbroken series of correct positions and documents to look back to and build upon. From 1945/46 when the FI reconstituted itself, its documents were only partially correct analyses and programmes for the new world situation. Since the 1951 Congress the documents of all the fragments, of all the sections, have been fatally flawed by centrism, sectarianism and opportunism. Re-elaboration involves a review of the post war period, of the responses to that period by the centrists and a restatement of programme in the light of this analysis. Trotsky used an analogous approach in relation to the period of centrist degeneration of the Comintern:

"The Left Opposition. . . considers necessary a radical restatement of the programme of the Comintern, whose Marxist gold has been rendered completely worthless by centristic alloy."¹⁴⁷

The first stage of re-elaboration is to develop clear positions on the key questions that have caused chaos within or been thoroughly revised by the post war degenerated Trotskyist movement:

a) Imperialism- Trotsky's perspective was based on the view that all the imperialist powers would face collapse and catastrophe as a result of a prolonged and unimaginably destructive war. The outcome would be a profound revolutionary situation from which capitalism if it survived would do so at tremendously reduced levels of production and under fascist or bonapartist regimes. This proved a false perspective. US imperialism emerged from the war immensely strengthened-the expansion of its productive capacity, its enormous export of capital led the way to a prolonged boom. Democratic regimes were re-established in the major imperialist powers. Social democracy maintained or regained its hold on the working class of Britain and Germany. Stalinism dominated the French and Italian labour movements. A new relationship of forces, unforeseen and unforeseeable by Trotsky emerged. The long boom, the period of unchallenged US hegemony in the imperialist world, the armed truce with the Stalinist bureaucracy, replacement of the Franco British colonial empires by a system of semi-colonial client states, the emergence of new areas of Balkanisation (the Middle East) all necessitate perspectival and programmatic analysis. Only thus can the period of renewed crisis, class struggle and war, preparations for which have characterised the 1970s and '80s, be understood and acted upon.

b) Stalinism-Trotsky predicted the destruction of Stalinism either by an imperialist victory or as a result of political revolution. Neither eventuality occurred. Indeed a process of Stalinist expansion took place which, occurring through a number of stages, resulted in the establishment of workers' states, degenerate from birth. In these states, rather than in the USSR itself, the most acute political revolutionary crises have occurred-Hungary, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia. The real nature of the Stalinist expansion and the lessons of the various political revolutionary crises were never understood by the FI's fragments.

Pablo, Mandel, Cannon and Healy all capitulated to various shades of Stalinism at different times, while others, like Cliff and CLR James turned their backs on the Trotskyist analysis of the USSR. A revolutionary understanding of Stalinism, its expansion, the dynamics of its crises and of the strategy of political revolution will be integral elements within a re-elaborated programme.

c) Permanent Revolution - The Transitional Programme was extremely condensed in its tactical conclusions for the struggle in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, although it was supplemented by Trotsky's writings on India and Latin America. The extensive capitulations to petit-bourgeois nationalism by the Healyites, the USFI and other tendencies, all highlight the urgent need for a restatement of the tactical conclusions that flow from Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

Permanent revolution itself needs to be defined, not as an ever forward moving 'objective process', but as a strategy that has to be fought for by a conscious revolutionary party. Its tactical conclusions (anti imperialist united front, democratic demands etc) need to be understood as being premised on the maintenance of the independence of the working class and the refusal by it to subordinate its struggles or interests to the needs of a 'national democratic' (i.e. bourgeois) stage of the revolution.

d) Work in the unions and reformist parties -In the Transitional Programme Trotsky wrote that the crisis of leadership in the trade unions should be resolved in the following way:

[...] working class in Germany, and the role of the Comintern and social democracy in that defeat. This call drew sharp distinctions between all those who could be won to revolutionary politics through making a clean break with the old Internationals and those who wished to keep their bridges open to the twin camps of reformism (social democracy and Stalinism). In other words Trotsky urged an alliance around something that was a burning question facing the international working class and all those who claimed to represent its revolutionary interests. But in urging this alliance Trotsky always made clear that taking it forward meant developing an international programme that would seal the uncertain elements (OSP, SAP,RSP) to clear revolutionary action:

"Not only are denunciations of the Second and Third Internationals insufficient to advanced workers but the bare admission of the necessity of a new International does not suffice either. It is necessary to say clearly what International we have in mind: the restoration of the miserable Two and a Half International or the unification of the international proletarian vanguard on the basis of a

revolutionary programme that actually corresponds to the problems of our epoch. “48 The fight for this programme meant that the ILO (ICL) kept its programmatic positions intact and promulgated them within the programme commission that was established by the Four (but did not get very far).

The ICL entered the Bloc of Four well aware that its allies were leftward moving centrists. But at no time did Trotsky fail to criticise the politics and leaders of these organisations on every vacillation they made to the right. He also made clear that the Bloc did not mean that the ICL took any political responsibility for the other groups positions. Thus Trotsky could write in March 1934 when his allies were backtracking from their declaration:

"With regard to the OSP, as in all other cases, we draw a distinction between the centrism of the workers, which is only a transition stage for them, and the professional centrism of many leaders, among whom there are also incurables. That we will meet with the majority of the OSP workers on the road to the Fourth International-of this we are quite certain."149

This does not mean that today we regard all forms of centrism alike. In fact it is only by recognising centrism in all its variegated colours and stages that we can distinguish between a left break from centrism, to which we must reach out and win individuals or whole groupings to revolutionary Marxism, from the left vacillations of the inveterate centrists. We say quite openly that the history and record of the leaderships of all the centrist currents, Healy, Lambert, Mandel, Barnes, Moreno etc., have shown them to be incurable centrists, incapable of learning through their mistakes. A revolutionary international will be built with the best elements from within these currents but only through an implacable struggle against their leaders.

For us a necessary and inevitable stage in the struggle to re-found an International is the stage of building fighting propaganda groups. This term is profoundly misunderstood. Organisations such as the WSL insist that it is the equivalent of a sectarian turn away from the working class: the programme exists, the task is to win the “world Trotskyist movement” back to applying it. For the iSt on the other hand, the fighting propaganda group has been turned into a barren sectarian concept. Divorced from class struggle and programmatic re-elaboration, the Robertson cult has turned it into a provocation machine aimed directly at breaking up opposition tendencies.

The essence of a fighting propaganda group is neither of these things. It is a recognition of two real, fundamental and interrelated problems facing genuine Trotskyists. First we do not, and cannot yet have, full programmatic clarity. We have around us chaos, confusion and fragmentation. In these circumstances, genuine Marxists cannot bury their heads. Confusion on programme and theory leads to practical errors.

The fighting propaganda group’s *raison d’être* is to solve these theoretical problems. Lenin was clear on this during the Bolsheviks’ period as a type of fighting propaganda group.

"Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement".

This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opposition goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity. . . our party is only in the process of formation, its features are only just becoming defined and it has as yet far from settled accounts with the other trends of revolutionary thought that threaten to divert the movement from the correct path. . . Under these circumstances what at first sight appears to be an “unimportant” error may lead to most deplorable consequences and only short sighted people can consider factional disputes and a straight differentiation between shades of opinion inopportune or superfluous."150

The confusion in the post-war FI was even greater than that in the RSDLP in 1902. It is vital that our first task is to understand and overcome this confusion. But while it is our first task, it is not our only task. The second fundamental problem facing post-war Trotskyism was its continuing isolation from the working class. This was related to its programmatic weakness. The fighting propaganda group, therefore, does not turn its back on practical work.

It attempts to focus its programmatic work towards the fundamental needs, interests and concerns of

the working class. This is its only method of avoiding sectarianism. However, our size and implantation, and, we would contend, the size and implantation of most ostensibly Trotskyist groups, mean that a direct orientation to mass work is severely limited, not by choice, but by the conditions we find ourselves in. Thus our work has to be of an exemplary communist nature. Where circumstances allow-and we search such circumstances out actively-we fight for our communist politics inside the working class. We utilise tactical compromises, (e.g. the united front) to win support for revolutionary strategy and tactics and to win a hearing for our propaganda.

The question of whether a group is a propaganda group is not, in the first place, a question of numbers. It is rather a question of the stage of development of the Marxist nucleus and the working class movement. Thus an organisation of thousands can be a propaganda society a grouping of a few hundreds, a party. The reduced numbers in the underground circles of the Bolsheviks in 1914-17 represented the nuclei of a vanguard party that had led the workers in revolutionary mass struggles (in 1905 and 1912-14). It was consequently able to become a mass party within months of the restoration of legality.

Propaganda circles represent the first stage, the embryo stage of party building. In situations of illegality and repression this work would be heavily dominated by "discussion type activity".¹⁵¹ It is the period of the development of programme and the training of cadres.

Marxists however, are characterised by the striving to unite theory and practice, to enrich each with the other. Therefore they seek always to find every possible avenue to the working class in struggle. The stages of growth of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) and its Bolshevik wing have rich lessons for communists at all stages of party building. As the RSDLP passed from the period of propaganda circles to that of creating the framework of an illegal party, Lenin had cause to attack sharply those who wished to utilise this vital transition to dissolve or liquidate the programmatic gains and dilute the training of cadres (the Economists and the Mensheviks).

These stages and the transition between them are not however historical curiosities or unrepeatable events. The defeat or degeneration of parties and internationals can and do represent these problems.

Trotsky himself passed from circle-propagandist to clandestine party leader, to mass agitator, to leader of a mass party and International in the first twenty years of his political life.

In Trotsky's last exile he was again obliged to turn to the task of leading what were in effect propaganda groups and indeed to founding an International - most of whose sections were still propaganda groups. From 1929 to 1933 the International Left Opposition considered itself an expelled faction of the Comintern. It therefore devoted the overwhelming bulk of its activity to propaganda against the programmatic degeneration of the Comintern (against Socialism in One Country) and against the disastrous "Third Period" tactics. After the German catastrophe, the International Communist League was formed to openly address the workers aroused to struggle by the Fascist menace.

Trotsky had to purge the ICL's ranks of the sectarian traits which had developed in the imposed isolation and propagandism of the "Third Period." Trotsky therefore stressed the need to turn to the masses, to involve the small ICL nuclei in the mass organisations of the class - the trade unions and between 1934 and 1936 the Socialist Parties, where these were destabilized by the political and economic crisis. Yet Trotsky realised that the ICL sections remained propaganda groups, but ones that sought to orient to the class struggle. At the time of the French Turn he stressed that the French section was not a party, but only the embryo of one - i.e. its leadership was the first layer of cadre. It had yet to win a leading role within the proletarian vanguard.

Trotsky more than once characterised the ICL after 1933 as "instruments for the creation of revolutionary parties".¹⁵² We can put this another way, namely, propaganda groups seeking to transcend their existence as propaganda groups. At no time did Trotsky abandon this characterisation, although given the favourable position of the SWP(US) in the American labour movement and the inevitability of war, Trotsky emphasised the great prospects enjoyed by the FI

after 1938 for becoming a mass party through the convulsions brought on by the war.

The fighting propaganda group is thus a dialectical concept. It puts programme first not merely in theory, but in its practical struggle within the working class, albeit forced to do so on a small scale. This way we seek to win and train future cadres for the movement real leaders who understand and can apply communist politics. A return to this stage of work has been imposed upon us by the post-war collapse of Trotskyism. It cannot be wished away or jumped over. Faced with the collapse of the Comintern in the 1930s, Trotsky understood the importance of such a stage in the development of new revolutionary parties: "The real initiators of the FI begin with Marxist quality and turn it afterwards into mass quantity. The small but well-hardened and sharply ground axe splits, hews and shapes heavy beams. We should begin with an axe of steel. Even here the means of production are decisive." 153

However we reject absolutely any attempt to justify abstract propagandism. We do not advocate study circles divorced from the class struggle. Our programme is for the action of millions, not for saving our souls. We focus our propaganda on the key issues of the international and national class struggle. We take our place in the mass organisations of the working class, we orient to every major struggle - strikes, campaigns around democratic rights, the struggle of the unemployed, democratic reform in the unions, or the mass reformist parties.

We reject with contempt any attempt to turn Marxism into a sterile dogma justifying separation from or indifference to the struggles of the working class or other progressive forces. The neo-Bordigism of such groups as the iSt is absolutely foreign to us.

Nevertheless no small groupings in the present conditions can jump over the stage of focused propaganda. Those that attempt to do so, to pretend to be a party, to involve their members in constant shallow agitation, to engage in "mass" recruitment simply dig their own grave. The results are a leadership with primitive politics which develop sectarian and eventually cult-like features; a membership with no education unable to check or criticise the leadership. The "party" or league will eventually develop a rapid turnover of membership.

We stand by Trotsky's posing of the question in a similar stage:

"Our strength at the given stage lies in a correct appreciation, in a Marxian conception, in a correct revolutionary prognosis. These qualities we must present first of all to the proletarian vanguard. We act in the first place as propagandists. We are too weak to attempt to give answers to all questions, to intervene in all the specific conflicts, to formulate everywhere and in all places the slogans and replies of the left opposition. The chase after such a universality, with our weaknesses and the inexperience of many comrades, will often lead to too hasty conclusions, to imprudent slogans, to wrong solutions. By false steps in particulars we will be the ones to compromise ourselves by preventing the workers from appreciating the fundamental qualities of the Left Opposition. I do not want in any way to say by this that we must stand aside from the real struggle of the working class. Nothing of the sort. The advanced workers can test the revolutionary advantage of the Left Opposition only by living experiences, but one must learn to select the most vital, the most burning, and the most principled questions and on these question engage in combat without dispersing oneself in trifles and details." 154

The present world situation makes the building of an International and in the first place an international tendency, an urgent task. The 1980s are witnessing profound crises that indicate nothing less than a disruption of the world order achieved by imperialism after the Second World War. The renewed period of cold war by the USA against the USSR, the turmoil and wars in the Middle East, the attack on Argentina by Britain, revolutionary upheavals in Asia and Latin America all reveal this.

These events demonstrate that Lenin's characterisation of the epoch as one of wars and revolutions is becoming a generalised feature of the coming period. These events find their reflection also in the degenerate workers' states. The upheavals in Poland show that the new period will see challenges to the stranglehold of Stalinist bureaucratic rule in these states. The job of revolutionary Trotskyists is

to lead the revolutionary upheavals that occur to success - to the conquest of power by the working class. This can only be achieved by building revolutionary parties and an International firmly united around an international revolutionary programme. Such a programme will, in the sharp test of practice, win workers from Stalinism and social 'democracy and centrism only if it is re-elaborated for the new period.

The destruction of the FI after the war and its fragmentation and disorientation, make the job of building an International a more difficult one. But we are not fatalists. The class struggle will act as a constant spur to new layers of the proletariat, both within and outside of the existing movement that claims to be Trotskyist. It will propel these forces into a search for revolutionary answers. The task of the hour is to develop these answers. All talk of leading the masses without specifying exactly what programme they are to be led on is to lay the basis for further confusion and defeats.

We recognise that the development of a communist programme is an international task. A grouping isolated in one country will invariably succumb to national pressures - the SWP(GB) are a classic example of that. The Irish Workers Group and Workers Power have jointly attempted to begin these programmatic tasks.

Together we work as fraternal organisations. The aim of our two groups is ultimately to achieve a degree of programmatic agreement sufficient to facilitate the establishment of a genuine democratic centralist international tendency.

This in turn needs to be done through international discussion with other tendencies and groupings. We wish to seek out other groups who agree with our method and tasks. We wish to establish fraternal relations with other groups so that the work can be carried forward. We invite groups and individuals who agree with the positions and propositions in this document to enter into programmatic discussion with us, with the aim of jointly pursuing these programmatic tasks. It is precisely through the successful completion of these tasks that an international tendency based on a common method and programme and on democratic centralism, will be forged.

Within the disintegrating fragments of the Fourth International political disagreements have either been "overcome" by bureaucratic dictat or federalism. Both traditions represent a travesty of the traditions of democratic centralism pioneered by the Bolsheviks, the Comintern and the Fourth International.

In the process of forging an international tendency it is obvious that fully fledged democratic centralism will not arise simply through formal agreement on basic position documents or through joint work alone.

Democratic centralism itself will develop as part of the process of establishing operative agreement only all key programmatic, strategic and tactical questions. It will be preceded by a period of collaboration, of fraternal relations.

The construction of a democratic centralist international tendency will at first entail the establishment of a series of international conferences representing nationally elected leaderships. To the extent that binding agreement on programme and operative questions of principle can be reached an authoritative international leadership will be forged out of the national sections.

It will then be possible, finally, to elect an international leadership, invested with executive political power over the decisions of the national sections. By establishing democratic centralism in this manner real debate and decisions over the national tactics of constituent organisations can take place. Obviously an international leadership would take the opinions of a national section into serious consideration. It may even allow tactical experiments where minor differences of orientation or emphasis exist. However the international leadership would carefully oversee national work, check it against international developments, and ensure that it was carried out in a strictly principled communist fashion.

This is not "bureaucratic interference" or mere "collaboration". It is the common discipline that is built as a result of programmatic agreement.

The majority of subjectively revolutionary militants who we as a communist tendency can hope to relate to, remain within the centrist groups who claim to be Trotskyist. While we have no illusions in the leaderships of these tendencies, the international class struggle will continue to throw these organisations into crisis, leading to splits.

An international communist tendency would aim to win the best cadres from these groupings through intransigent criticism, programmatic debate and where possible common action against the class enemy. We do not hide, however from the fact that all of the FI's fragments are caricatures of Trotskyism.

This testifies to the fact that the Fourth International no longer exists as a revolutionary international. It is necessary to build a new world party of Socialist Revolution.

Whether that new International will be able to take up the banner of the Fourth International once again is not yet decided. It has not yet been proven whether the various fragments will travel along the reformist road of the LSSP. It may be that the hammer blows of the class struggle and the criticisms of an international communist tendency will break up the centrist amalgams and allow for a principled regroupment under the banner of a programmatically and organisationally rebuilt Fourth International.

It is possible that the so-called Trotskyists will openly abandon even formal adherence to the Fourth International and become qualitatively indistinguishable from social democracy or Stalinism - as the SWP(US) appears intent on doing. Should this happen with the major international fragments, then it may be possible for revolutionaries to , re-appropriate the banner of the Fourth International as their own.

What we can say is none of the existing claimants to the banner of the Fourth International represent the basis for the rebuilding of a revolutionary international. If they succeed in definitely liquidating the banner of the Fourth International into the camp of either social democracy or Stalinism in the full view of significant sections of the international working class then we will not flinch from pronouncing the Fourth International to be dead in number as well as in programme. At present our perspective and tasks point to one inescapable conclusion - the FI no longer exists as a revolutionary international:

**FORWARD TO THE REFOUNDING OF A LENINIST TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL!
FOR A NEW WORLD PARTY OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!**

Endnotes

141. L. Trotsky, Writings 1931-38 (New York, 1976) p 286.

142. *ibid.*, p. 22.

143. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Preface to the German Edition of 1872" in *The Communist Manifesto* (New York, 1970) p. 12.

144. L. Trotsky, Writings 1933-34 (New York, 1975), p.73.

145. L. Trotsky, "Completing the Programme and Putting it to work" in *The Transitional programme* p.113.

146. *ibid.*, p.101.

147. L. Trotsky, Writings 1932-33 (New York, 1972) p.52.

148. L. Trotsky, Writings 1933-34 *op. cit.*, p. 67.

149. *ibid.*, p. 268.

150. V. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow, 1961) Vol. 5, p. 369.

151. G. Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party* (London, 1973) p. 55.

152. For example, see L. Trotsky, Writings (Supplement) 1934-40 (New York, 1979) p. 533: "The ICL cannot act as an independent party of the proletariat, it is only the instrument for the creation of independent parties".

153. L. Trotsky, Writings 1933-34 *op. cit.*, p. 268;

154. L. Trotsky, Writings 1930-31 (New York, 1973), p.297