

WORKERS' FIGHT
and the
FOURTH
INTERNATIONAL



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**This pamphlet is a report of the special Workers' Fight
Conference on the Fourth International held on 29th/30th
January 1973.**

WORKERS' FIGHT and the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

INTRODUCTION

On Saturday and Sunday January 23/29, WORKERS FIGHT held a special conference. Its purpose was to consider the group's position on the Fourth International.

It had been prepared for over a long period by schools, meetings, and discussions which involved all the members of the group. The conference UNANIMOUSLY decided to reiterate the POLITICAL ESSENCE of our declaration of 'critical support' for the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, but to eliminate the organisational ambiguities of that formula by redefining our activity and attitude as a "fight to regenerate the Fourth International", recognising the USFI as the Trotskyist mainstream.

The unanimity with which the political substance of the attitude to the USFI (which we adopted in 1969) was reiterated marked a major change, a clarification in the politics of the group: at every other conference since 1969 a major section of the group has opposed the majority position on the Fourth International.

Equally unanimous was the agreement on the need for a sharper definition of the inadequacies of the USFI, mainstream though it is - although no section of Workers Fight has ever denied its deficiencies or advocated other than CRITICAL support, or argued against the organisational independence necessary in Britain to stave off the warping and crippling effects of the degenerate form of Trotskyism which the USFI represents.

It was decided to publish a full account of our reasons for changing the formula, and our recognition of the need to maintain a separate organisational existence.

Why now, when the British working class is preoccupied with major struggles, spend so much of the group's time and resources on such a discussion? Because without reference to the struggle for an international working class party it is impossible to function as true revolutionaries in any one country.

COMMUNIST INTERNATIONALISM

Capitalism is a world-wide, intermeshing system, none of whose parts can be understood apart from the whole. Marxists see socialism as the withering away and elimination of all class contradictions, and also of the state that grows out of those contradictions, after the working class has taken power.

This is INCONCEIVABLE except on a material level of relative abundance, which eliminates the primitive struggle for existence which has been the urgent concern and permanent regulator of human history so far. Socialism must TAKE OFF FROM the highest point of production reached by capitalism, on the basis of the resources, and division of labour, of the WHOLE WORLD.

Therefore any programme of socialism is either a world programme or it is UTOPIAN NONSENSE. The working class is either a world revolutionary class or it is IMPOTENT. Revolutions in single countries, or continents, are only steps towards world revolution. Prolonged isolation amidst backwardness can lead to such mutations as Stalinism, combining elements of post-capitalist society with some of the worst barbarisms of class society.

For this reason, socialists have tried to organise a world revolutionary party: The First International, 1864-72; the Second, 1889-1914; the Third (Communist) International, 1919-33; the Fourth, founded in 1938.

The basis of the Third and Fourth Internationals was the international Communist programme. This programme saw the struggle for workers' power as on the immediate agenda. It was based on the total intermeshing of the world in all its parts; a programme for the building of a revolutionary party sufficient to the dimensions of the world revolution, that is, a WORLD BOLSHEVIK PARTY.

After the Russian Revolution, Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks founded the new Communist International in a sharp break with the practices of the Second International.

It attempted to fuse the fronts of the class struggle - the general political struggle with the sectional industrial struggles, and both with the ideological struggle - into a strategy for working class power. For legalism they substituted audacious revolutionary action to smash the capitalist state.

The sham 'internationalism' of the Second International

meant IMPOSING the norms of the advanced countries on the 'backward'; its opposition to nationalism meant compliance in the national slavery of the colonies.

Communist internationalism passionately championed the national rights and interests of the oppressed peoples of the world, distinguishing the nationalism of the oppressed peoples from the nationalism of the oppressors.

TROTSKYISM

The first four Congresses of the Communist International were a great communist renaissance, which codified experience and analysed reality.

The Fourth International was founded by Trotsky to defend the communist programme and rebuild the revolutionary International after the rise of Stalin's bureaucracy had led to the degeneration of the CI. It suffered cumulative defeats, but succeeded in one vital thing - it preserved the programme, the unfalsified tradition and the banner of communism, in implacable opposition to the counterfeit which Stalin's "Comintern" dragged through the mud and covered with the blood of honest revolutionaries.

THE CRISIS OF TROTSKYISM

After the second world war, the Trotskyists had to make a new analysis of the world, where vast changes had taken place. Capitalism was entering an expansionary boom. Forces other than those of Trotskyism carried through a major part of the programme of the Fourth International (in Eastern Europe and in China).

Beginning with the Yugoslav revolution in 1943, Trotskyism entered a period of crisis. Up to 1943 and with increasing doubt until the end of the decade, the Fourth International could regard itself as a movement based on a given 'Marxism' which guided practice and interpreted reality in the present and clearly indicated alternatives for the future. The 'philosophers' had interpreted history and proletarian experience.

But from the mid-'40s and after 1948 it became a matter of an increasingly desperate effort to catch up with events in reality which had not been expected, and, at first sight, appeared to CONTRADICT the expectations and also to invalidate the connection between the programme and the proletariat as Marxists had understood it.

This crisis was provoked not by the defeat of the

ment as such - this, in itself, could not be a major criterion. In Germany in the '30s the movement's correctness AND ITS DEFEAT had both been total. The crisis was provoked by the growth of forces outside it which, as in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, and later Cuba, carried through a major part of its programme.

The task was now to analyse the new events like the Stalinisation of Eastern Europe and the Chinese revolution; and to integrate the conclusions into a theory which, understanding the laws of motion of the real world, could function as a guide to action in that world, including the Stalinist states.

The general possibility of exceptional developments like those in Eastern Europe (structural assimilation) and Yugoslavia (conquest of power by a non-Marxist leadership) had been anticipated by Trotsky before world war 2. But it was necessary to analyse how THESE PARTICULAR developments had taken place, and how Trotskyists were to relate to the forces carrying through these changes.

This was never adequately done. Analyses - we believe correct analyses - were made leading to the designation of Eastern Europe, China, etc as deformed workers' states. These analyses were codified at the 3rd World Congress of 1951 and after, and form the foundation of all modern Trotskyism. But, as Trotsky explains in the following passage, codification, fundamental as it may be, is not all:

"The importance of a programme does not lie so much in the manner in which it formulates general theoretical conceptions (in the last analysis, this boils down to a question of 'codification', i.e. a concise exposition of the truths and generalisations which have been firmly and decisively acquired); it is to a much greater degree a question of drawing up the balance of the world economic and political experience of the last period, particularly of the revolutionary struggles of the last five years - so rich in events and mistakes..."

Following the rise of Stalinism, Trotskyism has been dogged by a real contradiction. An essential part of its perspectives, of its 'concept of the epoch', has been "the exceptional position which the Comintern and its leadership occupy with respect to the WHOLE MECHANICS OF THE PRESENT HISTORICAL EPOCH" (Trotsky, our emphasis). Yet the Trotskyists, the defenders of the revolutionary programme, have been isolated from the mass revolutionary forces.

Already at the end of the 1920s the contrast between its

size and the scope of its ambitions and aspirations, between what it wanted and believed needed doing and what it itself was able to do, rent the then Russian-based Trotskyist movement into three segments:

Those who saw only WHAT the industrialisation turn in Russia was doing and ignored how it was done and by whom it was done - Preobrazhensky, Piatakov, and the administrators;

Those who placed themselves entirely on the semi-syndicalist grounds of the effect on the working class, that is concerning themselves exclusively with HOW and BY WHOM the new industrialisation turn was carried out, and what the effects on the lives and rights of the Russian people were - neglecting and dismissing WHAT was done - the State Capitalists;

And those, like Trotsky, who resisted the decomposition, the mutually repellent one-sidedness, ignoring neither 'WHAT' nor 'WHOM', nor 'HOW'. The pattern was a recurring one.

The conflict has generated constant pressures towards one-sided ideological developments. Some write off the 'exceptional position' of the revolutionary leadership in 'the mechanics of the epoch'. The perspectives and the concept of the epoch thus become an 'objective' scheme, with 'objective', moreover, understood in a vulgar economic-determinist sense. This leads to an 'evolutionism' which is entirely vulgar and non-Marxist. The role of leadership, and even of the working class itself, comes in as an external factor, motivated only by dogma.

Some place totally speculative hopes in the established mass organisations and their leaderships, or construct hopeful scenarios for the rapid ascent of Trotskyism to the leadership of those organisations. Such is the 'Trotskyist' who "denies the sharp tasks of today in the name of dreams about soft tasks of the future... Theoretically, it means to fail to base oneself on the developments now going on in real life, to detach oneself from them in the name of dreams" (Lenin).

Some junk the 'global' side of the perspectives, the concept of the organic imminence of 'wars and revolutions', and dismiss the actual revolutions as marginal details. They retreat into subjectivism, reducing perspectives to the level of daily tasks. As their historic criterion, their yardstick by which to judge events and developments, they overemphasise the immediate effects on and involvement - or non-involvement - of the working class, brushing aside the titanic 'objective' - economic, social - effects of these events in our epoch.

The developments thrown up by the still-continuing post-war crisis of Trotskyism have been of that character, and have reproduced those trends

NEW CLASS TENDENCIES

The fundamental dividing line in the Trotskyist movement post-war is that between the 'new class' tendencies and those based on the 1951 're-founding'. This dividing line was derived from the attempt to come to an understanding of the new phenomena at a fundamental level.

But the 'new class' tendencies represented a complete break with Marxism. The 'bureaucratic collectivist' theory amounted to a description of the Stalinist societies similar to Trotsky's description of Russia, but with a few labels changed - and with an implicit perspective of ignoring, denying, or evading the whole Marxist conception of the necessary development of capitalism and from capitalism. In its major organisational manifestation - the US Schachtmanites - the tendency became a variant of ex-Marxist utopian socialism.

The 'state capitalists' remained formally within the discipline of Marxist categories - yet again with a wide range of scope for purely subjective emphasis, conclusions, options. They are characterised by a crude 'workerism'. This is not best countered by those polemicists (such as the USFI) who insist on seeing the working class as only part of a whole unfolding world 'process' and actually lose sight of working class activity as the SUBJECT of history. Nonetheless it IS crippling for an understanding of the world outside the metropolitan countries. (See note 1)

IMPLICITLY this theory says that we are living in an era of expanding capitalism, of new organic growth, with massive implications for revolutionary practice. It means that Third World struggles can lead only to new repressive regimes (and in the case of IS there is a totally arbitrary approach to such struggles: FOR the Vietnamese; neutral on Korea; implicitly hostile to China.) In fact, the specific theory of IS (most important for us) is a disguised form of bureaucratic collectivism, as Grant demonstrated already in 1949.

The capitalist nature of the USSR is not, in Cliff's theory, ultimately derived from ECONOMIC categories - commodities, exchange values - but from competition of USE-VALUES between the USSR and the West (arms competition). This turns basic Marxist economics on its head, and IN FACT presents a picture of a NEW society, with a NEW and

unexpected dynamic. More rigorous thinkers like Schachtman called a picture like that 'bureaucratic collectivism' (i.e. society X). Cliff chooses to try to cram it within familiar terms and to return to the Marxist categories, motivated by a shallow dogmatism.

The unsatisfactory nature of 'state capitalist' theory is especially clear in the analysis of 'Third World' state capitalism. It defines the 'state capitalist' class in the USSR by its role and function, which is said by analogy to be capitalist. Yet, regarding the revolutionary struggles in China, for example, they talk of an 'embryo class' of state capitalists - without any comparable functions. Again they divorce conclusions and designations from any analysis of what they arbitrarily call state capitalism.

In its own way it is a negative demonstration that the solution to the problems of the movement in the late '40s did not lie with the 'new class' groups. Rejecting the 1948/51 conclusions of the Fourth International as a break with the programmatic foundations of the movement, they quite logically dismiss the FI as only an ALIEN political tendency. Unfortunately, in addition, the IS group campaigns against the Leninist concept of internationalism, thus breaking not only with a tendency but with a principle.

TWO TRENDS

The 1951 CODIFICATION proved inadequate to answer the subsequent questions of supplementary analysis, orientation and tactics posed to the movement and two distinct trends emerged from the forces represented at the Third World Congress.

One subsided into a primitive dogmatism based on a historically uprooted version of 1938 Trotskyism, without relation to any problems or developments in the world since. Implicitly it became a tendency to liquidate Trotskyism back into utopian socialism, based on timeless dogmas - to cut its roots. In Britain this has been the Socialist Labour League; in France the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste.

The second genuinely attempted to come to grips with the real problems, to draw conclusions from the codifications of 1951 and after; but normally did this by political and adaptation - to 'left' social democracy, Maoism, etc. It AFFIRMS the basic ideas of Trotskyism but doesn't always seem to have a use for them. This is now the USFI; its current British representative is the International Marxist Group.

Both strands arise from the failure to INTEGRATE the post-war experience into Marxist theory, and the resulting DESTRUCTURING of that theory.

The separation dogmatism/adaptationism, though a convenient shorthand, is partly artificial. The dogmatists (SLL, OCI, etc) have NOT been free from adaptationism, or the tendency to liquidate Trotskyism organisationally and politically.

Nor have the 'chameleons' been undogmatic. Whereas the SLL and the OCI HIDE from the real world behind dogmas, the USFI has often only succeeded in viewing the world in a very distorted way through ideas used as rather cumbersome dogmas - though at least the OUTLINE of reality comes into the picture.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

The SLL/OCI tendency are not just sectarian bigots who just happen to have developed a totally incoherent world outlook, which, for example, saw Mao's China as a workers' state but refused to admit that Cuba was, too. All their politics, even formally correct 'dogmas', have had their roots in rational analysis of reality cut.

Their version of the history and problems of Trotskyism, the myth of 'Pabloism', is a lying mystification. 'Pabloism' is the name given by the SLL/OCI to a very wide range of post-war shortcomings, allegedly a tendency to 'capitulate' to Stalinism/ social democracy/ nationalism/ the petty bourgeoisie etc etc, and to 'liquidate'. In fact, 'Pabloism' is a myth created by one section of the Trotskyist movement after 1951 to 'explain' all the errors, inadequacies, and faults common to the whole movement by ascribing them to a section of it which is defined FACTIONALLY, ORGANISATIONALLY, and ARBITRARILY.

The concept of 'Pabloism' tells us as much about the history and problems of Trotskyism as the term 'Khrushchevite revisionism' tells about the history of the Stalinist current. In both cases the encapsulated history involved in the term makes it impossible to know precisely what is meant. And not accidentally. The essence in both cases is that such terms and procedures are NECESSARY to avoid a more precise attempt at accounting which would look too closely at the specific features of those using the swear word in question (the "anti-Pabloites" or the Maoists) and their affinities with those denounced.

Not a single one of the alleged traits of 'Pabloism', bar support for guerrilla struggle, was absent from one or other of the 'anti-Pabloite' tendencies. Far from explaining anything, the myth of 'Pabloism', though given a certain apparent credibility by the opportunist faults of the USFI, like all superstitious fairy tales HINDERS understanding of

the real problems - and substitutes fictional for real solutions.

The systematic lying of the SLL/OCI tendencies is merely a conscious continuation of the self-deception and rejection of all rational politics which is at the root of their 'solution' to the problems of post-war Trotskyism. Their internal lack of democracy and gangsterism result from ideological bankruptcy and consequent fear of free discussion and questions. The result is the dictatorship of a priestly caste led by a Healy or a Lambert - essentially a negation of everything Trotskyism stands for - the subordination of the world to rational working class control.

The tragic joke against these dogmatists is that they developed independently AFTER 1951 in polemical opposition to the USFI (then the ISFI) which, in a period of stagnation of the workers movement in the metropolitan countries, and big struggles in the colonies (Indochina, Algeria) tried with meagre resources to apply a basic principle of Lenin's Comintern: that revolutionaries in the advanced countries must ACTIVELY aid the revolts in the colonies.

In self-rigorous but incoherent anger against the 'Pabloites', and some of their one-sidedness on the colonial revolution, the SLL/OCI wound up disdaining the struggles in the 'Third World' in an explicit way that even the Second International before 1914 would have found shameful !

There is a peculiar TENDENCY in the International Committee groups (OCI, SLL) towards filling the dehydrated forms of dogmatised 'Trotskyist' ideas with Second Internationalist content.

This is almost total in the French OCI. Whereas the SLL has a revolutionary position on the Middle East, the OCI actually equates Israel (a racist state comparable to South Africa) and the Arab states. The OCI supporters in Zionist-occupied Palestine ('Israel') accommodate to Zionism in the name of promoting Jewish-Arab working class unity. This is equivalent to South African Trotskyists trying to ignore apartheid, the better to promote working-class unity !

Uniformly, the OCI's positions, pseudo-Trotskyist in appearance, are a giant step backwards. They disdain Third World struggles. They reject the idea that there is a Marxist method, and talk in terms of an organic ripening of working-class consciousness. They discount the ideological struggle, and the question of Marxist consciousness being brought to the working class from outside. They capitulate

to the rump of the French Social-Democracy. They push the slogan of a Communist Party-Socialist Party united front, leaving the question of PROGRAMME to one side. They bill a CP - SP government in France, or a 'pure' Social-Democratic government in Germany, as a WORKERS' GOVERNMENT - even while the CAPITALIST STATE remains stable !

Since splitting from the SLL in 1971, this group has created, with a few satellites, an 'Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International'. Given their politics, they will only manage to 'reconstruct' the Fourth International... back into the Second ! Or a preposterous miniature caricature of the Second !

THE UNITED SECRETARIAT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The most rational tendency, which has developed the general outlook we believe to be Trotskyism, is the USFI. Committing crass errors, never really adequate in the post-war period, it had nevertheless not 'betrayed' Trotskyism, as the sectarian slanderers said. Its decision, made in 1967, that a political revolution was, after all, necessary in China - though it was an EMPIRICAL RECTIFICATION NEVER ADEQUATELY EXPLAINED IN RELATION TO THE PAST POSITIONS - removed the major difference which had until then separately us decisively from the USFI. We declared critical support for the USFI in 1969.

Support meant recognition that this was the mainstream, and a definitive break with the 'anti-Pabloites'. 'Critical' meant understanding that MEMBERSHIP of the USFI tendency was not compatible with revolutionary practice, then, in Britain at least.

The Fourth International has tended to dissolve all concrete questions of communist practice into a grand picture of 'the Revolution' as a shadowy but powerful historical actor, marching relentlessly across the world, a latter-day 'hidden hand'. Analysis of the colonial revolution has tended to collapse into 'euphoric' crystal ball gazing. Permanent revolution has been seen as a general scenario, a self-propelling 'process', rather than what it really is, a fusion of different movements, relating to different (bourgeois-democratic, socialist) tasks, a fusion realised by revolutionary practice.

The FI has made correct, though incomplete, explanations of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions in terms of the overall OBJECTIVE 'Third World' relationship to imperialism; of the class structure of those countries; and of the survival of the post-capitalist state in Russia. It has repeatedly ignored the INCOMPLETENESS of the revolution in these

countries. It has glorified bureaucratic formations such as those of Mao and Tito. At times it has explicitly denied the need for a supplementary political revolution in these states, which have never known workers' democracy and suffer all the contradictions of stalinist misrule. The PROGRAMMATIC DOCUMENT of the 1963 reunification even talks of the Yugoslav, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions confirming the theory of Permanent Revolution "to the hilt" ! If so, while no workers' democracy exists (not even in Cuba) and no direct workers' rule - then the theory of Permanent Revolution has been foreshortened by a head. So, indeed, has the theory of PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION.

In practical politics, the FI has shown a totally exaggerated confidence in various petty-bourgeois leaderships, and a dissolving of many of the theoretical 'norms' of Trotskyism, even while they are maintained formally.

It is true that the Fourth International's record of solidarity work with the Algerian revolution stands in shining contrast to the record of the 'anti-Pabloite' tendencies. But that does not and cannot justify the exaggerated confidence granted to the FLN. At the 1963 World Congress, it was stated as a simple FACT that Algeria was shortly to become a workers' state, and the "socialist orientation" of Ben Bella and Boumedienne was hailed without criticism.

Now Algeria probably was one of the few places where a repeat of the Cuban experience was possible. But a simple assertion of faith that a repeat would happen was not enough for revolutionaries.

On Vietnam, likewise, the Fourth International has a good record of solidarity work. But the attitude of the FI majority (exemplified by the Ligue Communiste) to the peace settlement of 1973 has been one of unqualified trust in the political judgment and ability for political struggle of the NLF and DRV leadership. What has happened to the Trotskyist PROGRAMME of workers' councils ? Certainly, the NLF, the DRV, and the Vietnamese CP, despite their heroic military struggle, do not fight for that programme.

For a whole period, propaganda for the political revolution virtually disappeared from the press of the FI. The programme of political revolution was in fact explicitly renounced for Yugoslavia and (until as late as 1967) China. The FI gave its confidence to, for example, the boasts of the Chinese bureaucracy about the Great Leap Forward.

To this day, the attitude of the Fourth International to China is extremely muddled. Maitain writes that the

Chinese workers' state has degenerated - whereas the FACT is that it was totally deformed from the start. The attitude of the FI to the non-USSR deformed workers' states - those in which an independent revolution occurred - has been much closer to the Right Communist Oppositionists regarding Russia in the 30s (Brandler/Lovestene) than to the attitude and programme of Trotsky and the movement for the Fourth International.

The whole of the FI's "deep entry" work in the Social-Democratic parties was based on work with, attempts to create, or even TO SUBSTITUTE FOR left-centrist currents ('replacement leaderships') within the mass workers' parties. In many countries, public Trotskyist activity simply disappeared (Belgium, Britain). Everything was subordinated to the expected 'next stage' of political development.

As with the case of Algeria, the expectations were not unreasonable. But to make hopeful expectations the FOUNDATION of your policy is not correct: it "denies the sharp tasks of today in the name of dreams about soft tasks of the future... Theoretically, it means to fail to base oneself on the developments now going on in real life, to detach oneself from them in the name of dreams."

With the upsurge of student militancy in the 1960s, the FI reacted with its characteristic manner towards new radical movements - 'chameleonism', trying to take on the colour of its surroundings. There was a sharp turn away from the organic involvement in the workers' movement, towards open, increasingly propagandistic, 'enlightening' work, usually directed towards peripheral social groups and layers.

It is true that nothing better has existed, and that it is easier to see 'clearly' afterwards than in the maelstrom. But if the raison d'etre of the Fourth International is the preservation and development of the communist theory and programme - as the only possible basis for party-building - then to pass over inadequacies and confusions out of respect for 'the International' is to negate that very raison d'etre.

WORKERS. FIGHT AND THE I.M.G.

General appreciations of the International - though necessary - are not sufficient. For Lenin, rebuilding the proletarian International, like building the Bolshevik party, and making the Russian revolution, was a matter of finding, at each moment, at each stage, the concrete LINK IN THE CHAIN - not abstract proclamations of intention or pious recognition of 'necessities', historic or otherwise. Our task too is to find the concrete links of revolutionary practice

and judge every existing organisation from that point of view.

When WORKERS FIGHT first appeared in October 1967, we were primarily involved in rank-and-file struggle in the parts. The proto-IMG was hobnobbing within the Workers' Control movement with Jack Jones - who was actively sabotaging the dock strikes of that period. Their paper carried no criticism, and only a veiled hint of disapproval, WITHOUT MENTIONING JONES BY NAME.

The IMG behaved with gross irresponsibility, indeed ideological and political cowardice, in refusing to enter the inchoate centrist regroupment that was the 1968 International Socialists. The creation of the present bureaucratized IS, and the consolidation of the control of the Cliff tendency, was not inevitable, but the result of a defeat for Trotskyism, in 1968 and afterwards.

Our expulsion from IS, in December 1971, posed sharply the issue of our ORGANISATIONAL relations with the USFI. Was it possible to maintain a serious orientation towards the working class, to continue the positive work we had done in IS, as part of the IMG ?

Negotiations with the IMG (which had helped the IS leaders with factionally useful information against us in November 1971) showed it wasn't. We proposed to them a preliminary period of discussion coupled with action in producing a joint workers' weekly paper. They refused. Manoeuvres, attempts to exploit the question of the Fourth International in a petty factional way - that was their main concern.

We resumed contact after a six months' gap in December 1972, while still in the process of working out a full assessment of the USFI. We asked for access to the major draft documents for the forthcoming '10th World Congress' (which were anyway soon to be made public). We needed the documents so as to base our discussion on the FI on the fullest knowledge of the latest balance sheet by the the USFI of the serious shifts in its positions over the last years. We naturally offered the necessary guarantees regarding control of circulation, etc,

In response it was demanded that we allow participation in our discussion by a "representative of the USFI"; only then would the necessary documents for a full POLITICAL assessment of the USFI today be made available to us. This presented us with a very serious problem. Having decided to continue to function in the class struggle during the course of the thorough discussion of the history, politics, and current trends within the broad 'Fourth Internationalist' movement, we had to take steps to prevent the discussion from disrupting WF organisationally. Especially so given that two of the main currents in the world movement have British sections (SLL and IMG) in opposition

to whose politics and organisation WF has taken shape in the last six years. Objectively the possibility existed that the internal differentiation and disputes that might emerge in assessing the diverse currents of international 'Trotskyism' could cripple the group and tear it apart (Nt.2) Any involvement by the IMG (or by the USFI on behalf of the IMG) could not do other than lead to a disruption of the discussion on the International and its probable transformation into a factional conflict. Especially given the IMG's record of shortsighted and petty factionalism, nothing was to be expected other than that they would use any opportunities they were given not to engage in a serious political discussion with us, but to continue the policy of trying to conduct organisational raids on WF. (Their efforts had been inept, to be sure: but their intention at least was clear enough). In addition any special rights for the USFI or the IMG in our internal affairs would place in question the organisational integrity of the group and partially pre-empt the group conference and usurp its powers; after all, the conference was being called, on the authority of the previous WF conference, to decide on our international affiliations, if any. We refused the USFI/IMG any special rights in the discussion. In response they withheld the documents. Here, of course, they were within their formal rights ... except that their National Committee had just passed a resolution in favour of THE FUSION of the two groups. Nothing can demonstrate the IMG's "organisational fetish" - in essence apolitical - attitude to the FI more clearly than this combination of talk of organisational fusion together with REFUSAL to allow a discussion of the proposed political basis for that fusion - the politics of the USFI in the period before the '10th World Congress'. They tried to reduce the documents necessary for any assessment of the current state of the USFI into BARGAINING COUNTERS to force their way past our organisational distrust of them, into the internal affairs of a group whose organisational integrity they had promised to respect before discussion opened.

Over the last year we have watched the IMG in amazement - genuine, not rhetorical ! Its preoccupations have been determined by the dynamics of the development of its 'own' insignificant and muddled ideas, not by the dynamics of the class struggle erupting round them.

They stood Lenin's ideas on propaganda, agitation, and calls to action on their head, just when the class struggle rendered them vital. They stood theory on its head again by declaring that Lenin's analysis of imperialism, the theory of capitalism in its period of decay and parasitism - this analysis FLOWED FROM the concept of the epoch !

It was this same 'concept' that explained opposition to

'Popular Fronts' - subordination of communists to alliances with 'left' bourgeois politicians. That was one in the eye for poor old Marx, who insisted as long ago as 1850, way before the epoch of imperialism, on the POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE of the working class as a basic principle.

And so on, and so on. The IMG is an unhealthy tendency, and it is only the latest example of the inability of the International which fosters it to build a serious organisation in the British working class. The dynamic of the leadership is not that of a group which seriously assesses and learns from its own mistakes, JUDGED BY THE NEEDS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE, but that of an intellectual clique dominated by the periodic rush of 'brilliant' new ideas to the head.

To fuse with that tendency would be to adopt the existence of an opposition tendency, one of a number, within an unhealthy organisation, whose size and importance in the working class, even compared to our own small size, does not recommend such a policy. There are many excellent comrades in the IMG. We think they are wasted there - and the British working class cannot afford such waste.

Workers Fight will fight for the communist internationalist programme in the British working class. The IMG, so far, has been nothing but a diversion from this work.

Not a single voice, except that of a non-member of the group, a visitor, was raised at the conference in favour of fusion with the IMG.

REGENERATION

We will contribute to the necessary REGENERATION of the Fourth International by building in Britain and by attempting to contribute to the clarification of the political problems that have beset the movement since the war. We seek dialogue, discussion, and exchange of material with the USFI - and with other tendencies. Internationalism is a basic political principle but it is not an organisational fetish. Where an international ORGANISATION, with the weaknesses and faults of the USFI, is the best that exists, the task of those who disagree is neither to hide in a nationalist shell nor to prostrate themselves before a fetish - but to seek dialogue, political and ideological clarification, and on the basis of that clarification, international co-thinkers.

By referring to 'regeneration' we do not mean that the USFI has degenerated. On the contrary, in 1967 it was REGENERATED by the decision on China. We mean that the only explanation for

the last quarter century of the FI's history is that it has been a DEGENERATE form of Trotskyism. The basis of this degeneration has been the destructing (in the case of much of the SLL/OCI material, the complete reduction to non-rational gibberish) discussed above.

We regard ourselves as standing organisationally apart from the USFI. We do not oppose the necessity of an International, nor (like IS) do we break with a basic principle under guise of separating ourselves from a tendency.

But it is toy internationalism which sacrifices fighting for the communist internationalist programme amongst the working class it can reach to a bare organisational fetish - or which ignores the ideological and political ROOTS of the inadequacy of the FI in the post-war period out of deference to the shadowy organisational reality of the USFI. This sham internationalism - the attitude that would dictate that we must join the IMG at the expense of our practical work - is possible only for self-indulgent romantics who feel little responsibility to the working class they live amongst.

Feeling that responsibility, the WF conference had no choice but to vote the way it did.

FOOTNOTES

Note 1.

The French group, Lutte Ouvriere, holds that the USSR is a degenerate workers state and that all the other stalinist states are capitalist states because they underwent no classic workers' revolution such as that of October 1917 in Russia (Though LO has a creditable record of support for third world struggles which stands in sharp contrast to the dishonourable record of IS in Britain). Concentrating exclusively on the evolution and character of the state machine in these countries LO ignores the fact that their social structure is identical with that of the USSR (and historically inseparable from the existence of the USSR and their interaction with it). The untenable and totally incoherent nature of the theoretical position of LO becomes obvious if we apply the analytical method they use on states like Cuba, China and E. Germany to the USSR itself. For Trotsky at the end of the 1930s the character of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state was not at all determined by the character of the state machine (he believed that a political counter-revolution had in fact occurred) but by the structure and nature of the post-capitalist society surviving from the Revolution, despite the transformation of the actual state machine into an instrument for oppressing the working class in the interests of the stalinist bureaucracy. In fact Trotsky said that in his opinion the stalinist state machine WITHOUT the surviving social con-
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ests of the October Revolution would be nothing less than a FASCIST STATE. Only in that it guarded and defended these social remains of the Revolution (in its own way and for the reason that the privileges and interests of the bureaucracy were tied inseparably to the post capitalist society established by the October Revolution) could the USSR be still considered a Workers State, even a degenerated one. Thus if LO applies its method for China, Cuba, etc., to the USSR itself it must cease to hold the degenerated workers state position: and if it applies the actual considerations which underpin Trotsky's analysis of the USSR to the other stalinist states then it must cease to consider them as capitalist.

Note 2.

As the League For A Workers Republic, an Irish group we were once associated with was torn into three pieces during a similar discussion in 1970. Three groups resulted: an IC (SLL) grouping, a group in critical support of the USFI, and a small rump consisting of the majority of the old "leadership", hanging together on a clique basis. After the SLL/OCI split in the IC, in 1971, this rump joined the OCI-dominated Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI), because it appeared still to be fighting the good fight against "Pabloism". Initially they did not even know the SPECIFIC politics of the OCI, and in any case would have been incapable of critically assessing them. Its paper, WORKERS REPUBLIC now introduces a full blooded version of Lambertist "Trotskyism" to the English speaking world. During the recent 26 County elections it demonstrated its bankruptcy strikingly. Its slogans were as follows: "VOTE LABOUR; NO COALITION: LABOUR TO POWER WITH SOCIALIST POLICIES, SUPPORTED BY THE TRADE UNIONS!! Since the possibility of a coalition depended on the small Labour Party, which had pledged itself to a coalition, every vote for Labour was a vote for coalition, and it was impossible IN REALITY to vote Labour without voting Bourgeois coalition, without helping the Labour leaders make it possible. The main emphasis, the only directive to action was "VOTE LABOUR". By any one of the basic Marxist tenets on the class nature of the state the LWR lent its small weight to the bourgeois coalition. In so far as the slogans related to the world of hard realities and real political relationships no other interpretation is possible. In addition the slogan "LABOUR TO POWER WITH SOCIALIST POLICIES" can do nothing but spread illusions in this BOURGEOIS LABOUR PARTY. That this slogan is favoured in Britain by the SLL and the RSL does not make it any the less alien to Trotskyism and the Fourth International. It is a product of social-democratised "Trotskyism" in its most degenerate state of political and intellectual enfeeblement (See for instance "IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM" where Trotsky upbraids Max Shachtman for spreading or having similar illusions in the US Socialist Party in the late 1930s.). As for the trade unions, it is the ELEMENTARY duty of revolutionaries to fight implacably against Trade Union support for any Government administering capitalism: only if it is really expected that Labour COULD come to power and promote "socialist policies"

does such a slogan make any sense at all. That the leaders and members of the LWR are in their intention revolutionaries only emphasises the scope of the retrogression - almost to the politics of the Second International - involved in the OCRFI. Of course it shows also the backwardness of the people who run the LWR, thinking it is possible to operate as revolutionaries without bothering to master even the ABC of Trotskyism, operating instead with an eclectic mish-mash composed of half understood "basic truths" and the anti-Pabloite mythology. Even more, perhaps, than the SLL/OCI these former comrades of ours have demonstrated that the road to Hell - in their case to inadvertently crossing the class line in the elections: no less a verdict is possible - is paved with the best "anti-Pabloite" and "anti-revisionist" intentions. And especially where the anti-Pabloite fairy tales are a substitute for a serious and politically responsible approach to the history and problems of the Trotskyist movement.

Sean Matgama

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