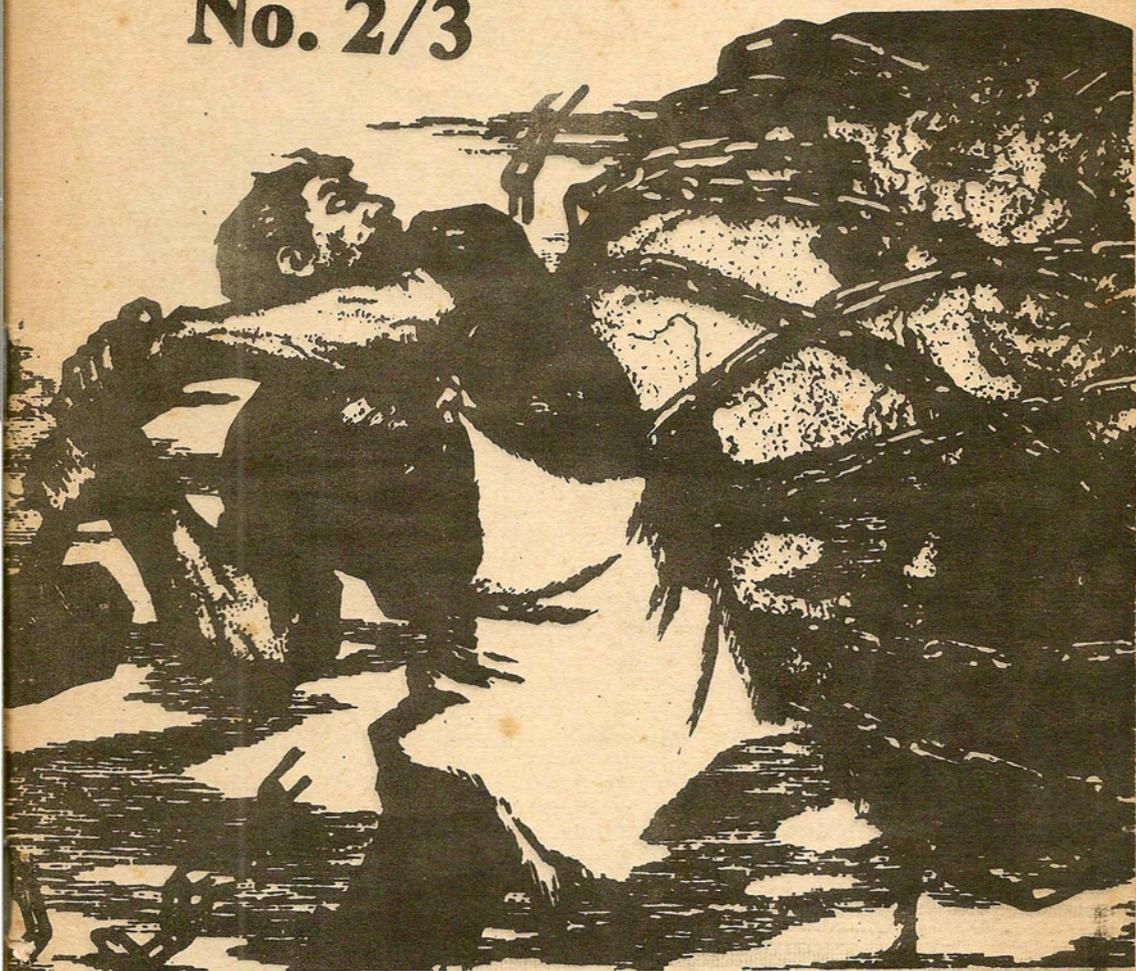


# INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST

No. 2/3



**January 1977**

**DEMOCRACY IN THE Labour Party**

**CONTROLLING THE FIGHT-BACK: THE NEW RACE  
RELATIONS ACT**

**DISCUSSION ON THE PROGRAMME**

**PROBLEMS OF PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM**

**REVIEWS: "The Challenge of the Left Opposition"; "The Iron  
Heel"; "A History of the People's Democracies"; "The Night  
of Long Knives"**

**30p**

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**EDITORIAL**

# DEMOCRACY IN THE LABOUR PARTY

THE CURRENT WITCH-HUNT against the tendency around the weekly paper **Militant** continues a fine tradition of periodically butchering Labour Party democracy in order to "defend" "democratic" socialism — and capitalist interests in the Labour Party.

From the moment the Labour Government inherited the mess the Tories left on leaving office in 1974, such a purge was predictable and inevitable. The red-in-tooth-&-claw Toryism of the Heath government created the conditions for the effervescent revival of Labour Party 'socialism' after 1970. It was a tremendous boost for the Labour leaders, who had reduced their organisation almost to a shell by their policies of 1966-70. But in office it hinders and impedes their freedom of action.

As the industrial struggle has declined, the importance of the Labour Party as a real and potential focus of opposition to the Government has increased. The fact that the biggest working class demonstration since the anti-Industrial Relations Bill fight — the cuts demonstration of November 17th — was called by the public sector unions and the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party was a fearful warning to the Government of the explosive contradictions built up in the Labour Party since 1970.

It should be a salutary lesson against the ultra-leftism and neo-syndicalism rampant on the far left since the late 1960s.

Why do the Red-hunters focus on **Militant**? It is the second biggest of the left reformist tendencies, after **Tribune**. It has no MPs, but it is believed to have a tightly organised grouping around the newspaper. In addition it is a tendency which openly calls itself 'Marxist' and morbidly insists on flaunting a few tattered rags, like Miss Haversham's musty linen, from the aborted Trotskyist past of its ideological inspirer, Ted Grant.

These points only explain why **Militant** makes a convenient target for the bourgeois press, and why the Labour leaders think that **Militant** can be picked on with relative impunity. But if **Militant** is 'made an example of', it will not be because of its differences with the other left reformists, which are of historical if not archaeological significance, but because of what it has in common with them. It is not because it is fundamentally different, but because it has really taken root in the left-reformist soil of the British labour movement, that **Militant** can be picked on as a symbolic offering to the bourgeoisie and used to intimidate the rest of the Labour left into subservience. Its 'Trotskyist' tinge is an excuse, not the reason.

Nor, as the bourgeois press would have it, is **Militant** on the offensive to 'take over'. Its supporters are anyway numbered in hundreds. It may dream — and why not? — or plan to get some of its supporters into Parliament. But **Militant** has for a long time now actively collaborated with Transport House in policing the Labour Party Young Socialists, keeping it barely alive, running it bureaucratically and subserviently. If supporters of **Red Weekly** or **Workers' Action** or even **The Chartist** in the Labour Party said they believed in a peaceful road to socialism, they would be lying. But **Militant** genuinely does believe in a parliamentary road to socialism — indeed, it has explicitly broken with any Marxist view of the State and of the necessity of the violent overthrow and dismantling of the bourgeois state.

It is a mutant from the Trotskyism of the time of Trotsky, which has arrived slowly, but logically and inexorably, at a very primitive version of the politics of the maximalist-rationalist segment of the Second International (a relatively pure fossil of which is the SPGB). It regards the Labour Party as in no sense optional, but as the only possible arena for its 'enlightening' work — right up to the eve of the socialist transformation of society, if not beyond.

How did this mutation take place?

At the end of the Second World War, the leaders of the Trotskyist **Revolutionary Communist Party**, of whom Grant is the only survivor active on the left, faced the problem of how to characterise the states of Eastern Europe occupied by the Russian national army. Deciding that these states were essentially similar to the Russian Stalinist state, but could not possibly be considered workers' states as no workers' revolution had occurred, they tentatively decided (within the Political Committee, a small body which members of the RCP National Committee could not attend or receive minutes of) that Russia itself was a state capitalist society.

Then, while the rest of the Trotskyist movement debated the question, eventually, in 1949, to decide that the East European states had been structurally assimilated to the social system of the Stalinist USSR (following Trotsky's analysis on the Baltic states and eastern Poland in 1939-40), the RCP leaders did an about-turn, and, before the rest of the Fourth International, declared those

states deformed workers' states. In 1948 that placed them in the ambivalent position of hailing the coup which consolidated Stalinist control in Czechoslovakia as a great proletarian victory — while the Czechoslovakian Trotskyists denounced it as a counter-revolutionary act!

The RCP leadership's theory, a logical inversion of their previous thinking, committed them to the view that the essence of a workers' state was nationalisation. The state form was of secondary importance.

When they had thought the state form central, they, with extremely mechanical reasoning, felt obliged to characterise the degenerated workers' state of Russia as state-capitalist. When they changed their minds, they decided that a workers' state could be created by a 'Red' Army invasion, or a process of cold nationalisation (already in 1945, 75% of industry in advanced Czechoslovakia had been nationalised). Nationalisation was everything. Eventually — they did not arrive at the full implications of this view in a day — the political tendency centred on Grant, after the break-up of the RCP, would decide that Syria, Burma, and even Portugal (briefly — they seem to have reconsidered lately) were workers' states — though they are reticent on expounding their views on these questions.

Effectively, the Grant tendency's conclusions simply wrote out of Marxism the theoretical possibility, understood by Engels, Bukharin, Lenin, and Trotsky, of state capitalism (which is what exists in Syria and Burma). An economy with a certain level of nationalisation is ipso facto a workers' state — irrespective of who nationalises, how, or why.

Thus they necessarily excised also the Marxist theory of the state: a 'Bonapartist' state could raise itself above society and evolve into either proletarian or bourgeois bonapartism, serving either of those classes.

Whatever confusion reigned in the mainstream Fourth International until 1949 and after, and even if we think, as the I-CL does, that many of the conclusions are eclectic and incoherent, leaving crucial questions unanswered — it was the confusion of revolutionaries, in strange circumstances, linked to a struggle for life for the perspective of proletarian revolution and living science of Marxism. The Haston/Grant tendency simply committed hara-kiri, disembowelling 'Marxism' of any revolutionary content.

From their analysis of the workers' states, writing out of Marxist theory both the Leninist theory of the state and proletarian revolution, and the idea of state capitalism (not Tony Cliff's incoherent mish-mash 'theory', but the very theoretical possibility, central to any revolutionary Marxism in the epoch of monopoly capitalism), everything else flowed.

The Grantites' central slogan, the "Nationalisation of the 250 Monopolies", in Britain, would be socialism, if they were right in the 1940s. And every advance in nationalisation is a step to socialism. They are a throwback to the original Fabians.

■ ■ ■

In parallel to their ideological mutation on the question of the workers' states developed the Grant tendency's views on nationalisation dictated by the needs of a decrepit capitalism, as in post-war Britain. In 1945 they declared it inconceivable that Labour could

undertake any large-scale nationalisation. When those nationalisations took place on a large scale, the morale and the convictions of the RCP majority leadership collapsed. Until 1949, with increasing emptiness, the Haston-Grant majority of the RCP continued to argue a quasi-syndicalist perspective, expressing sectarian disdain for the Labour Party, and expecting a mass revolutionary party to grow directly from industrial struggles (rather like IS today — Tony Cliff was a member of the RCP majority). Grant was, it seems, the only leader of the majority to oppose work in the Labour Party on principle, Haston having only tactical objections. In 1949 the RCP collapsed. Haston deserted in 1950 and is today a right-wing reformist. Grant drifted into the Labour Party.

The Labourist ideas he has developed there, over the years, have a logical link with the previous quasi-syndicalism.

Always ultra-mechanistic, the leaders of the RCP expected easy mass growth. In 1944 they produced a document, 'Preparing for Power', when they had 300 or 400 members! Inescapably the logic was of a largely spontaneous 'ripening' of large masses into revolutionaries. Today, the same idea of a ripening of consciousness — within the social democracy.

The mechanism which catapulted Grant from a semi-syndicalist to Labourism was the experience of leading the RCP to debacle and collapse into the Labour Party. Once 'on his feet' again, however, he remained true to his previous ideological fundamentals — only in a different environment.



But the attack on **Militant** spotlights the threat to revolutionaries in the Labour Party and to those who actually want to fight the government's attacks, including industrial militants for whom the Labour Party is a secondary consideration. At the moment major battles in the class struggles are being fought out in the Labour Party. That will only surprise the inveterate sectarians and syndicalists who make a false and rigid distinction between the economic reformist arena and the Parliamentary reformist arena. The battle for democracy in the Labour Party is the **fight for the right of militants and revolutionaries to fight within the party of the trade unions for working-class policies against the crisis and the system that produces it.**

There must be no witch-hunt in the Labour Party. Revolutionaries as well as social-democrats must assert the right to free speech in the party of the trade unions. **Militant** is in the front line — it must be defended unconditionally. Their endless droning about "Nationalising the 250 Monopolies" and "Socialism" being "the only answer" to any problem may bore us to distraction: but we must defend intransigently their right to drone and bore and fight for their conceptions. They are a legitimate part of the labour movement and Labour Party.

In essence it is not **Militant** that is at stake. The bosses and the trade union and Labour Party bureaucrats have largely stemmed — for now — the class struggle on the shop floor. The attempt to stop free speech in the Labour Party is a logical extension of what has happened there. For them it is a necessary extension. For us it is essential that they should not succeed.

Defend working class democracy in the Labour Party!

# 10 years

As this journal appears, we have just — this October — completed our tenth year in the task of critically re-working the 'stock-in-trade' of the major tendencies issuing from Trotsky's Fourth International, striving to regenerate an adequate revolutionary-communist programme, while simultaneously using the by no means obsolete common heritage of ideas of the tendencies basing themselves on the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, fighting to build **an organisation** of internationalist communists in the working class movement. The existence of the I-CL as a growing national force in the working-class movement testifies to at least a measure of success in the latter task.

The Workers' Fight group (principal component of the December 1975 fusion which formed the I-CL) was founded in 1966 by four comrades breaking from the Grant ('Militant') tendency. Coming (two of us) from the SLL (now WRP), and having rejected the SLL because of its sectarianism, particularly in relation to the Labour Party, we found that the rightward-moving centrists of the Grant group had managed to combine "Trotskyist orthodoxy" with passive, speculative, Menshevik politics. In mid-1966 we produced the founding document of our tendency, a long criticism of vulgar-evolutionist 'Trotskyism' ("What We Are and What We Must Become")

We thus concluded that the major ostensibly-Trotskyist groups were congealed sects (the IS, recruiting on a basis of explicit anti-Trotskyism, and the proto-IMG, buried deep in left social-democracy, were no positive alternative). That left us with the choice of giving up the struggle, or of cutting a new track, attempting to create a tendency free from the defects we saw and defined. That being the question, the answer was implicit.

We were aware that we faced major ideological tasks; but we did not relapse into a discussion-circle existence. As an informal grouping inside the loosely-structured Irish Workers' Group (1966-7) and as a tendency inside IS (1968-71), Workers Fight defended what we considered to be basic Trotskyist

ideas. From late 1966 to late 1967 we produced five issues (nos. 15/6-20) of the journal "An Solas"/"Workers' Republic". It was formally an IWG organ; but almost entirely written by WF. A duplicated "Workers' Fight" magazine was also produced in 1967-8. Simultaneously, as we made some new members, we were active in the docks and in tenants' struggles. Two comrades played a leading role in the autumn 1967 strike movement in the docks.

In that way, the tendency maintained an active relation to the class struggle — and at the same time undertook a process of critically assessing the current versions of 'Trotskyism'. Central to that process was the Workers' Fight group's evolving attitude to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

In 1967 Workers' Fight held that there was no Fourth International, while conceding that the USFI was the least unhealthy of the existing tendencies. (See "Reply to comrade Eamonn McCann's proposal for immediate affiliation to the USFI", IWG IB, December 1967). In 1969, after the USFI had declared for a political revolution in China, we concluded that — despite very large divergences on concrete questions — there was agreement on basic programmatic codifications. The group re-defined its position as "critical support for the USFI"

Three years of subsequent study and political experience showed the inadequacy of that position: that a revolutionary programme is not just "codifications", but also a living summary of responses to "concrete questions".

The contradiction in the position was sharply posed by the existence of the IMG, from 1969 the official USFI section. We were forced, on the global programmatic issues, to recognise that of the would-be FIs the USFI was the most respectable. But we saw the IMG, in 1967 as no more than a left social-democratic would-be 'replacement leadership'; in 1968 a studentist irrelevance, unable to take advantage of the openings for massive growth seized by IS; and in 1972, in face of a massive class-struggle upsurge in Britain, adopting a passive-propagandist method which could be called quasi-Bordigist, were it not a contradiction in terms to speak of quasi-Bordigism which lasts no longer than a year!

Realising, therefore, that the USFI's failings were major **programmatic** failings, the Workers' Fight group in 1973 modified its position to "for the regeneration of the Fourth International, recognising the USFI as the mainstream of post-Trotsky Trotskyism"; and, in 1975, drew out the logic of that position, to assert that — while the USFI was the mainstream

— **no Fourth International** existed in the tradition of Trotsky.

**Formally**, the 1975 position — adopted by the I-CL in its founding resolution — seems to repeat the 1967 position. What has been gained, however, is a far more thorough understanding of the nature, the interconnections, and the extent of the problems of post-Trotsky Trotskyism. The **vulgar evolutionism** so crassly expressed by the Grant tendency underlies — in different forms — the politics of **all** the major Fourth Internationalist currents (even the SLL-WRP — to the extent that consciously-formulated ideas of any sort guide that organisation).

The development of that understanding could not, and did not, take place in isolation from the concrete questions of the class struggle: the French general strike of May 1968 and the mass strike movements of 1972-4 in Britain; the struggle in Ireland and the problems posed by it in terms of the national question, permanent revolution, terrorism; the victory in Vietnam, **both** a tremendous popular victory **and** the inauguration of an anti-working class bureaucratic regime.

In the complexity and richness of the questions they pose, the Portuguese events of 1974-5 can perhaps play the role for revolutionaries today that the 1905 Russian Revolution did in its era. In "**International Communist**" no. 1, we made a beginning towards drawing out those lessons, and we shall continue our task of analysing that, and other important developments in the class struggle, in later issues of this journal.

Having, in our special issue on "**The I-CL and the Fourth International**", mapped out the chapter headings for a critique and renovation of revolutionary theory, we will thus begin to fill in the text of those chapters.

We could and should have achieved much more, more rapidly, in the last ten years. In his "History of American Trotskyism". J P Cannon talks of the contemptuous description of the founders of the American Trotskyist movement after their 1928 expulsion from the CPUSA as "three generals without an army" (Cannon, Shachtman, Abern). We were four foot-soldiers, who had a very great deal to learn and at least as much to un-learn, with no resources but our own. The 'three generals' at least had a living tradition, the guidance of Leon Trotsky, as well as their own experience; we found ourselves in a 'Trotskyist' movement in chaos.

Without complacency, we believe that in the last ten years we have achieved political and organisational development sufficient to allow us to set as a realistic goal a qualitative advance in the next period ahead.

# CONTROLLING THE FIGHTBACK: THE NEW RACE RELATIONS ACT

by S. RICHARDSON

RACE RELATIONS law is complementary to immigration and citizenship law. The latter laws limit the size of the 'black problem' and undermine the social rights (and hence political strength) of black migrant and settler workers. The former manage the 'black problem' by appearing to combat racial discrimination. Limiting the size of the 'problem' makes it more manageable; this is the crucial link between immigration and race relations law.

As Jenkins said, introducing the new Race Relations Bill in the Commons, "the third principle of Government policy is that there is a clear limit to the amount of immigration which this country can absorb, and that it is in the interests of the racial minorities themselves to maintain a strict control over immigration" (4-6-1976, col. 1548).

The point is very clear. Black workers in Britain can only be tolerated and better integrated if there are only a limited number of them. The *victims* of racialism are seen as the problem; and, though the point of legal pressure may be on the persons discriminating, the government agrees that it is only justifiable to apply

such pressure if the racist is assured about the limited number of his potential victims.

Race relations laws, then, while not *explicitly* defining blacks as the problem, as the immigration laws do with their entry quotas, voucher systems, patrial/non-patrial distinction, etc., completely accept this premise.

While the immigration control laws are widely and straightforwardly denounced as racist, race relations laws are in no way so obviously divisive, nor so easily dealt with. They are seen as an attempt to ameliorate the conditions of black people in Britain hitherto pushed to the bottom of the pile. In certain very limited respects, the race relations laws have in fact helped black people, and this encourages the view that a better race relations act could genuinely overcome racial discrimination.

Given the neglect of the fight against racialism by the labour movement, indeed the racist practices and prejudices in the labour movement, it is little wonder that many black people and anti-racist whites have turned to the state for aid in the fight against racialism. The paradox of a state which promotes racialism through its policing agents, its immigration laws, etc, being proposed as an agency for combatting racialism is only possible because people advocating better race relations law accept the view that the state is fundamentally neutral, that there is no unifying class principle in its various policies, and any bad administration can be removed or reformed. *When looking at race relations laws we are therefore looking at an aspect of reformism.*

## THE NEW RACE RELATIONS BILL

The new race relations bill, which will probably be enacted in the autumn of this year, has had a mixed life. Representations have been made by various interested bodies, including the more reformist black groups, both before and after the publication of the September 1975 White Paper, 'Racial Discrimination', upon which the Bill is based. Though little mentioned outside of the circles of the race relations industry, the black communities, trade union bureaucracy, employers associations and so on, the Bill has acted as a focus for many important issues. In the course of its short life, Lyons, the Home Office minister responsible for immigration and race relations (and hence this Bill), has resigned on the question of liberalising entry of dependents and the allocation of money to help overcome what is termed 'racial disadvantage'; the National Union of Seamen [NUS] has sought to amend the section on shipping; the TUC has

set up a sub-committee on race relations; five conferences of delegates from black organisations have been organised and held by the Community Relations Commissions to discuss the Bill; and finally, on Third Reading, the Bill was sucked into the racist reaction whipped up over the entry of Malawi Asians and the associated events.

#### THE 'MALAWI ASIANS' FURORE

The Report stage of a Bill, followed by its Third Reading, is usually a relatively tame affair — particularly if opposition is mild at Second Reading, where the Bill is discussed in principle. This was the case, with the brief exceptions of Powell, Bell etc., on this Bill. However, Second Reading of this Bill happened on 3rd March, Report took place on the 8th and 9th July. Second Reading lasted about six hours, Report over 21 hours.

What happened in between times was a massive racist reaction whipped up firstly by the press and then by the fascist National Front and National Party, starting with the issue of the Malawi Asians and escalating to take in the 'Black problem' as a whole. The politicians who have built a reputation on racialism, such as Powell and Bell, took the opportunity of the Report stage of the Bill to raise the issue of repatriation. The Conservatives, frightened of being outflanked on the right, and pushed by racist outbursts from Mellish and others supposedly to their left, used the occasion to press for tighter immigration control.

The Government, having already given promises (on 'tightening up of abuses', 'review of the citizenship law' etc.) the Monday before, during an immigration debate forced by the Tories, tried for their part to stick to the Bill. Though Jenkins apologetically called the debate "useful", the junior minister at the Department of Employment dealing with the Bill wrote an article in *Tribune* hailing Labour's 21-hour defence of the Bill as a victory against the racials.

Clearly the Government sees this Bill as important and is determined to see it through, despite the fact that it has now received widespread and often adverse publicity. Moreover, the Labour Party and the trade unions will point to it as a sign of their sincerity in fighting racism.

Socialists, both black and white, are to be faced with a Bill which is critically supported by many leaders of the Black communities (some of them self-appointed or appointed via the race relations industry); by leading elements in the trade union, the Labour Party, the Communist Party etc. Marxists need to understand why it was introduced, what it says, and how to relate to it.

#### LAWS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

The new Bill, when enacted, will be the third British race relations Act. Like the 1965 and 1968 Acts, the Bill is part of an overall policy on immigration and race relations. Unlike the earlier Acts, it is also linked to anti-sex discrimination law. This link is to be strengthened, at least legally. The Government, as early as September 1974, in its White Paper 'Equality for Women', stated that its "ultimate aim is to harmonise the powers and procedures for dealing with sex and race discrimination so as to ensure genuine equality of opportunity in both fields" (p.6). The wording of the new Bill follows very closely the wording of the Sex Discrimination Act and is similar both in scope and in enforcement. As with the Sex Discrimination Act, the new race relations Bill applies to employment, training, promotion, education, housing, provision of goods and services, advertising, trade unions, partnerships, etc. Though most of these areas were covered by the 1968 Race Relations Act, the revised and supposedly improved wording of the Sex Discrimination Act has been followed. More importantly, the Bill sets up enforcement procedures and bodies similar to the Sex Discrimination Act's, and the old Race Relations Board and Community Relations Commissions are to go.

As with the Sex Discrimination Act, the government's motivation for passing this new Bill is to de-fuse opposition to a form of oppression, and channel it into a legal framework.

#### ROOTS OF RACIALISM

Unlike sex oppression however, racial oppression is linked to immigration (though immigration controls discriminate on sex as well as racial grounds) and the management of this form of oppression has a long history and a sizeable industry which colours it.

Racialism was not 'invented' by the ruling class as a device to justify oppression of blacks and to divide the working class. However, it evolved and took seed as part of the super oppression of blacks. Racialism justified the violation of formal equality that the ruling class consistently made in the slave trade and later in colonial and neo colonial robbery. Racialism was functional and particularly so as the white workers who received some of the limited benefits from imperialism came to hold to it and thereby tied them to the social order which oppressed them also. With the increase in black immigration into Britain post World War Two, in response to the massive labour shortages (particularly for unskilled labour, this divisive function of racialism came to the

fore in British 'home affairs'. John Berger, in his book, 'A Seventh Man', puts matters this way:

"The presence of migrant workers, seen as intrinsically inferior and therefore occupying an inferior position in society confirms the principle that a social hierarchy — of some kind or another — is justified and inevitable. The working class comes to accept the basic bourgeois claim that social inequality is finally an expression of natural inequality.

"Once accepted, the principle of natural inequality gives rise to fear: the fear of being cheated out of one's natural and rightful place in the hierarchy. The threat is thought of as coming from both above and below — the working class will become no less suspicious of the bosses. But they may become equally jealous of their privileges over those they consider to be their natural inferiors.....

"The principle of natural inequality rests upon judging men and women according to their abilities. It is obvious that their ability varies, and that abilities are unequally distributed..... what determines a person's position in the social hierarchy is the sum of his abilities as required in that particular social and economic system. He is no longer seen as another man, as the unique centre of his own experience: he is seen, in other words, as the mere conglomerate of certain capacities and needs. He is seen, in other words, as a complex of functions within a social system. And he can never be seen as more than that unless the notion of equality between men is reintroduced.

"Equality has nothing to do with capacity or function: it is the recognition of being....

"Only in relation to what men are in their entirety can a social system be judged just or unjust: otherwise it can be merely assessed as relatively efficient or inefficient. The principle of equality is the revolutionary principle, not only because it challenges hierarchies, but because it asserts that all men are equally whole. And the converse is just as true: to accept inequality as natural is to become fragmented, is to see oneself as no more than the sum of a set of capacities and needs.

"This is why the working class, if it accepts the natural inferiority of the migrants, is likely to reduce its own demands to economic ones, to fragment itself and to lose its own political identity. When the indigenous worker accepts inequality as the principle to sustain his own self-esteem, he reinforces and completes the fragmentation which society is already imposing upon him."

"That this will continue happening is the calculation of the ruling class." (p.140-141)

## RULING CLASS STRATEGY AND THE 'RACE RELATIONS INDUSTRY'

The ruling class, however, does not just want the idea that social inequality is natural to be accepted, it also wants social stability. When the racist reaction to immigrants in the late 50's and early 60's, exacerbated by urban decay and housing shortages, led to violent attacks — with the threat of worse to come — the government was forced to act. The strategy since 1962 has been threefold. First, to set an absolute limit on the numbers of black people entering Britain as settlers. This minimises the 'black problem'. Second, as part of the orientation towards Europe, to change the basis for the importation of cheap foreign labour from settler to contract. Thirdly, in order to maintain the principle that social inequality is natural, while tackling the socially disruptive racist reaction and black resistance, to set up a managing body to contain the situation i.e. the Race Relations industry. ( This strategy is very well outlined in a recent pamphlet: Race, Class, and the State: the Black experience in Britain by A. Sivanadan, published by the Institute of Race Relations, price 30p. Reviewed in International Communist No. 1.)

This strategy was fraught with problems, not the least being the selling of the idea to lesser capitalists, managers, senior administrators, trade union bureaucrats etc. It also had to be sold to the black people already in Britain and to the 'New Commonwealth' governments. The reluctant acceptance of this strategy by 'New Commonwealth' governments is a tale much too complex to go into here. The selling of the strategy to the administrators, employers, and black settlers was the job of the Race Relations Industry. Making a slow start at first, this industry has grown over the past fourteen years to be a veritable movement — as a recent CRC publication described it. The Race Relations Industry has branches in Parliament (e.g. the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration); in central government (e.g. the Department of Employment Race Relations Employment Advisory Service); in semi-independent government bodies ( Race Relations Board and the Community Relations Council); in education (e.g. Bristol University); in community and local government projects (both through funding of projects started independent of the industry and through funding of various schemes submitted to the local authority for approval); in the trade unions (e.g. the TUC Standing Committee on Race Relations and the NUJ Race Relations sub-committee); in the political parties (Conservative, Labour, Liberal, and

Communist); and last but by no means least, among black groups in Britain (e.g. the recent founding conference of the National Organisation of African, Asian and Caribbean Peoples). Obviously the degree of coordination between the different branches varies enormously, as does the amount of radical rhetoric employed. Some branches are genuinely snared by the rest of the movement, which though now a movement, is still an industry with the Home Office as the policy production centre (with some allowance for feed-back).

But the Race Relations Movement has common practical aims: to teach whites, particularly employers and various senior functionaries, to accept blacks and to treat them formally the same as whites; to reduce the fight against racialism — a fight whose ultimate aim is real equality which involves a revolutionary change in society — to the fight for 'equal opportunity' for blacks.

Blacks suffer, according to the Race Relations Industry, from the twin evils of racial discrimination and racial disadvantage. Equal opportunity involves, therefore, educating against racial prejudice, which produces racial discrimination and administering to enable blacks to receive extra help to overcome racial disadvantage.

The more radical of the Race Relations Movement admit that the social 'disadvantages' of blacks in British society are rooted in the legacies of slavery, colonial and neo-colonial pillaging and distortion of 'New Commonwealth' countries' economies, and racist definition and practice on the part of whites in Britain. The others have a clear image of blacks as people who are socially handicapped and who therefore morally deserve help. But the overriding consideration of all race relations law is social peace, particularly the de-fusion of black resistance.

#### THE NEW BILL AND THE STRATEGY

The government, up to now, has been largely successful in its 'integration' policy, de-fusing black protest and resistance. The 1968 Act, via the Race Relations Board and Community Relations Commission, and the rest of the race relations movement, has succeeded in containing nearly all the politically explosive dissent. But nearly all isn't all, and if the group not 'contained' — among the second-generation blacks — is growing, prompt action is required. The government's White Paper makes it clear that opening up equal opportunity for black people, making serious effort to combat racialism as opposed to educating and cajoling as did the 1965 and 1968 Acts, is necessary because of the protest of the young West Indians and more recently the young Asians. These youths could generate within the black commun-

ities as a whole a spirit of opposition, which *could* spill over into the white population.

To integrate these sections, a more vigorous campaigning body, called the Commission for Racial Equality, is required to replace the educational Race Relations Board and Community Relations Commission. And further legal channels for protest are to be opened up, other than complaint through the Race Relations Board. As the White Paper 'Racial Discrimination' puts it, "to abandon a whole group of people in society without legal redress against unfair discrimination is to leave them with no option but to find their own redress. It is no longer necessary to recite the immense damage, material as well as moral, which ensues when a minority loses faith in the capacity of social institutions to be impartial and fair" (p.6). The Race Relations Industry as it has expanded and gained more experience, has become more sensitive to the problems of being a black workers in Britain, and more alive to the fact that the black workers, particularly the youth, are not going to take matters lying down. This latest Bill is therefore the legal stage of the race relation's movement policy of containment of young black protest within a reformist and legalist framework. The White Paper prefers to put it this way: "The Government has decided that the first priority in fashioning a coherent and long-term strategy to deal with the interlocking problems of immigration, cultural differences, racial disadvantage, and discrimination is to give more substantial effect to what it has already undertaken to do: to strengthen the law already on the Statute Book." (p.5)

There are secondary motives, other than containment behind the new Bill and the Race Relations industry's overall policy. We have remarked on the 'moral' obligation certain leading Race Relations Movement personnel feel they have. This 'moral' pressure is certainly a reason for pushing this Bill.

Two other motives that should be noted are the desire to curb the excess of racialism in the white population, and the feeling that having been stuck with black labour at home, it might as well be put to the best uses possible.

On the first point, it should be remembered that particularly the more far-sighted members of the ruling class do not wish to see socially disturbing outbursts of racist and fascist violence. The capitalist press may have whipped up much of this racist reaction and it may prove useful to the Government in presenting its legislation on citizenship and greater immigration control as yielding to public pressure; but, on the whole, the ruling class is against these outbursts. It is aware that ability to whip up this reaction is dependent upon a racist attitude in much of the

British white population and is therefore in favour of the use of 'educational' and mild 'legal' levers to shift the residue of racialism. On the second point, the White Paper, echoing many other statements of the Race Relations industry, is very explicit: "Racial discrimination, and the remediable disadvantages experienced by sections of the community because of their colour or ethnic origins are.....also a form of economic and social waste, which we as a society cannot afford." (p.2). Opening up 'equal opportunity' not only, it is hoped, will give the black youth the feeling of having a chance and a place in the system, but it will also yield labour of various skills and potentials, which can be used to the full by industry and commerce.

#### THE TEXT OF THE BILL

Turning to the Bill itself, there are certain improvements on the 1968 Act which should be given a guarded welcome. Some of the more important ones are: first, the definition of discrimination is extended to include indirect discrimination, thus giving legal recognition to the problem of covert racialism. The new definition will also include nationality and citizenship to get round the loophole revealed in 1972 in the case of Ealing Council, who adopted a British subjects only waiting list for housing. Second, the racial balance provision in the 1968 Act is repealed. This provision explicitly defined "too many blacks" as a problem and thus allowed employers to discriminate in order to preserve a racially balanced workforce. It is to be repealed, however, against the advice of the CBI (this, if nothing else, shows that the educating work of the RRB, CRC, etc has not worked completely on some of the lesser capitalists). Third, the Bill explicitly allows for training of black workers, something that should be taken up and pushed for at shopfloor level. Fourthly, the Lords ruling last year on the Liverpool Dockers Club, and earlier, on a Conservative Club, that the Race Relations Act did not cover clubs —including Labour and Workingmens' Clubs — is to be altered so that discrimination in clubs is unlawful. That the change is not the result of pressure from the Labour Movement, outraged that some of its clubs dare to practice a colour bar, is to its eternal shame. Many other sections of this Bill are, however, of a very dubious character, and particularly since some of them have been the subject of controversy among the Black groups and the Trade Unions, need to be looked at.

Firstly the section on exception for seamen recruited on to British ships overseas, mainly from the Indian sub-continent. The new Bill, though repealing the exceptions within the 1968 Act permitting discrimination in the allocation of cabin facilities,

retains the exception allowing other discrimination in the employment of foreign seamen. It does this against the strong advice and pressure of the National Union of Seamen, who are backed by the TUC and other national unions like NUPE.

On the face of it, the NUS case seems very laudable and egalitarian. Moreover, it has been taken as such by many black groups and trade union conferences on racialism like the one held in Birmingham on 6th March 1976, which, while calling for the repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act, also called for the removal of the foreign seamen's exclusion clause.

From the Parliamentary debate the following picture emerges: 500 ships (about 40% of the total registered in Britain) employ overseas seamen, mainly from Asia, at substantially reduced rates of pay. In addition there are 13 ships in the Government fleets employing low wage crews, and the Government, via its involvement in the oil industry, is also party to the discriminatory wage rates on oil tankers. There are 19,000 foreign seamen employed on UK ships, 11,000 from India, 600 from Pakistan, 1,400 from Bangladesh, 5,000 from Hong Kong and China, 500 from Sierra Leone, and 300 from Nigeria. Indian seamen receive about 40 pounds a month, Hong Kong recruits 120 to 130 pounds a month, UK-recruited seamen 160 pounds a month.

Certainly this situation should not be allowed to continue; the NUS are right to argue for equal pay for all seamen of all nationalities on British-registered ships. But more needs to be said. Firstly, some of the ships are under the British flag as a flag of convenience, and could easily switch to another. Secondly, there are legal wage limits in many of the countries from which foreign seamen are recruited onto British ships, and the governments of those countries (such as India) could bar their workers from taking jobs at increased rates of pay. Such governments are afraid that increases for the seamen could encourage other workers to fight for higher wages and have put this view to the British government. Thirdly, the cost of converting the cabin accommodation and the employers' preference in terms of skill and 'integration' problems would lead employers to put British seamen before Asians in recruitment if both were paid the same rate.

To fight for equal pay for Asian seamen the NUS would have to do more than remove the exception from the Race Relations Bill, thus forcing employers registered in Britain to pay the same rate to all the seamen it employed. It would have to fight for no sacking of Asians on British ships. It would have to use and establish international connections in the shipping unions, to fight maximum wage laws and the transfer of flags as a means of

reducing wages.

Clearly, launching such an international fight is no easy matter and some sackings and transfer of flags would be unavoidable. However, the NUS has no intention of fighting for real equal pay for Asian seamen. What it is fighting for under the guise of equal pay is preferential employment treatment for British seamen. This became obvious from the argument put at the March 1976 'Labour Assembly' when a NUS spokesman — and Communist Party member — argued the NUS case for removal of the exception in the Bill. He argued that the non-unionised Asian seamen should be considered secondary to British seamen at a time when unemployment among British seamen and in Britain generally was increasing. He was quite rightly howled down as a racist.

The NUS have only recently started to concern themselves with the low pay of Asian seamen. Previously they had been content to accept the bribe from the ship-owners of 15 pounds per foreign seaman employed. Only now when unemployment is increasing do they argue for equal pay, fully aware that unless it is linked to a campaign of no sacking of Asian seamen, no cut in the complement of overseas seamen employed on British-registered ships, etc, preferential employment opportunity will accrue to their members. Rather than fight against sackings and unemployment as trade declines, the NUS are saying British seamen before Asian seamen. That they argue for equal pay should not blind us to what is really going on.

#### “INCITEMENT TO RACIAL HATRED”

The incitement section of the 1965 Race Relations Act, still in force at present, is to be repealed by the new Bill and an amendment to the Public Order Act is to replace it. Since the Red Lion Square demonstration on which Kevin Gateley was killed, the legal profession has been discussing the legal niceties of incitement; and this provision in the Bill is the result. Many people have been very critical of the incitement sections, and not without good reasons. The wording still leaves room for the publication of racist propaganda under the guise of reporting, and, given the reluctance of the law to take on the fascists and racists, little faith can be put in this section. However, some of the suggested changes seem willy-nilly to ignore what a ban on 'incitement' has meant and could mean. Some have argued for a ban on fascist groups, others for a ban on racist propaganda. On the face of it, these seem correct measures. However, you have to ask, who are you asking to impose this ban? — and the simple answer is, the

existing capitalist state. The incitement provision of the Race Relations Act has already been used against anti-racists and anti-fascists, and if we propose to continue advocating in speeches and in writing that fascists be driven off the streets, then we must surely realise that 'unlawful incitement' could well be extended to cover our actions again.

The problem, here again, is the reformist view of the State as a neutral machine, whose policies express, not a definite class interest, but a varied mixture of 'good' and 'bad' elements. Many reformists will readily admit that the police force is racist; that the police harass blacks, protect fascists, victimise anti-fascists. But when it comes to discussing legislation, those same reformists calmly propose that same police should see to the prevention of racist incitement! An imperialist state's "ban" on racism or fascism can only be semi-fictitious; and inevitably such "bans" are couched in terms forbidding "extremism of both right and left". In practice they are used as much against the left as against the right — and at the same time they help to de-mobilise the militant forces which alone can really "ban" racism and fascism.

We support, of course, particular bans on fascists using particular public meeting halls, gaining TV time during elections, and so on, while always prioritising direct anti-fascist mass mobilisation above such administrative bans. But demands like that for the outlawing of the MSI in Italy (advanced by the centrists of the Democrazia Proletaria bloc), and for a government ban on the National Front and the National Party, are misleading and dangerous.

#### TRADE UNIONS

There are two sections in the Bill which directly affect trade unions. These are the section dealing with trade unions and the section on codes of practice. The trade union section is little different from the 1968 Act except that it does not contain any words to cover persons "concerned with the affairs of" a trade union. (Presumably, therefore, it excludes shop stewards). Why the Government should want to except shop stewards under the Race Relations law now after having included them (theoretically at least) for eight years, is not very clear. But it does raise problems for socialists. We recognise that the trade union movement has been and often still is guilty of racism, and that some shop stewards are certainly racists. Also we are against the State interfering in the labour movement. We are especially sensitive to the State's attempts to shackle the semi-official shop steward and convenor organisations of the working class.

What, then, do we do about the state's attempts to regulate the activities of shop stewards on the question of racialism? The new Bill contains measures that will affect the shop floor level of trade union organisation in terms of its practices on racial discrimination, even though it is not explicit in the way the 1968 Act is. During the passage of the Bill, the government — partly under Tory pressure, if the Parliamentary proceedings are to be believed — introduced a permissive section on codes of practice. Under this, the new Commission for Racial Equality "may issue codes of practice containing such practical guidance as the Commission think fit for either or both the following purposes, namely —

"a) the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment  
"b) the promotion of equality of opportunity in that field between persons of different racial groups"

A similar code is planned for sex discrimination. These two codes on sex and race, on the face of it, seem similar to the codes of practice issued under the Employment Protection Act. Those Employment Protection Act codes, attempting to regulate, manage and de-fuse struggles as they fundamentally do, should be rejected out of hand. But these codes laying down guidelines in the areas of sex and race discrimination, where the trade union movement could well do with a major shake-up, more than guidance: can we simply propose they are rejected also? I believe it is not so simple.

The race relations movement, in moving into the trade unions, has tried to limit the struggle against racialism, in this instance with a code of practice. However, racialism in the trade unions is usually not confronted at all. When the race relations merchants or their unwitting agents start pressing inside the unions, they not only present dangers, they also open up new opportunities for propaganda against racialism on a principled basis. The new code can be used in that it can be adopted by trade union bodies as a statement of intent to fight racialism in employment, promotion, redundancies, etc. A document of this kind can aid anti-racists in getting a fighting policy off the ground. There are dangers of getting sucked into the race relations machine, but they will have to be faced and fought. At the moment the trade unions have no overall, concerted policy to combat racism in their ranks. This document can be used to help launch one. Undoubtedly groups like the Communist Party will slavishly follow this code in the spirit of the race relations industry, i.e. managing rather than fighting racism: but this code, when it emerges, can be *used*, albeit in a critical spirit, by revolutionaries in the trade unions to fight racialism — *as long as such use is*

*coupled with firm opposition to any use of the police or the courts or state tribunals in internal trade union affairs.*

## "THE NEW COMMISSION"

The new Commission for Racial Equality proposed under the Bill will replace the Race Relations Board and the Community Relations Commission set up under the 1965 and 1968 Acts. The local Community Relations Councils, being semi-voluntary in any case, are to remain, and it seems likely the new Commission will coordinate their work. The Commission will be similar to the Equal Opportunities Commission set up under the Sex Discrimination Act, having powers to monitor events, conduct investigations, help certain individual cases, etc. It will probably take over some of the funding work performed by various government and local government institutions to various projects and self-help groups working in the black communities. This funding can act as semi-bribery, attempting as it does to shackle groups to the state financially. Evidence of the success of this integration is by no means clear, though many black groups believe that it is working as the Government intends. The new Commission's composition has been the subject of much representation. Many of the reformist black groups have argued for members of the various racial groups to be on this body; yet others have argued for elected representatives of the various 'minorities' to sit on the Commission. Though none of these suggestions are likely to be taken up, the illusions that they represent on the state as the agency for combatting racialism are enormous. The commission will be part of the State and a crucial element in the Race Relations Industry. Black representatives on this body would not aid the fight against racialism; instead they could help sow even deeper illusions in the capitalist state and its impartiality and honesty in fighting racism.

## ENFORCEMENT

Similar illusions are to be found in relation to suggestions made about enforcement. The enforcement arrangements for complaints of discrimination are to be changed to fit in with the Sex Discrimination Act procedures. Under the 1968 Act all complaints went to the Race Relations Board, which either referred the case to grievance procedures within an industry, or attempted conciliation itself. Though matters could be taken further, to court, leading to compensation and so on, in practice conciliation was the rule, particularly in employment cases. The Board itself could take firms to court but did so only very

rarely, usually contenting itself with advice on how to change the way an institution or firm operated. Under the new Race Relations Bill both the Commission and individuals will be able to go straight to the courts and, in employment matters, to the industrial tribunals. The Commission is supposedly to deal with the larger cases, involving a whole firm's policy, for instance. The individual is to deal with his own case before an industrial tribunal or court. This Bill is focused mainly on opening up 'equal opportunity' in employment and therefore it is the industrial tribunals which are of the greatest importance. The industrial tribunals already exist, hearing cases under the Employment Protection Act, Sex Discrimination Act, etc.

Their extension to race cases has brought the call for more black people on tribunals, similar to the call for more women on tribunals. That many of the old fogies on the tribunals, like judges, are probably insensitive to sex and race oppression if not downright sexist and racist, is not reason enough to advocate 'getting the right people onto tribunals'. Tribunals are governed by rules already laid down by the capitalist state with a view to ensuring discussion within strict limits. Moreover, tribunals are made up of a legally qualified chairperson and two lay members, one drawn from a CBI list, the other from a TUC list. If by chance a sympathetic, honest and radical person got onto a tribunal via the TUC list, he would be hamstrung both by the other two members of the Tribunal and, more importantly, by the terms of the Act. Once again, entering a state agency, in this case a branch of the judiciary, is no way to fight racialism. Industrial tribunals can be used under the new Bill by anyone; conciliation is available but (unlike the 1968 Act provisions) it is not mandatory. The danger of tribunals is that it atomises the persons complaining and encourages the view that racialism is simply a series of individual cases of racial discrimination, each to be dealt with on its merits. The person laying the complaint has to express his or her complaint within the terms of the Bill and is hence obliged to view the situation in the limited way the Bill does. The experience of the Equal Pay Act and the Industrial Tribunal rulings on the terms of that law shows the extent of that danger.

The main point of tribunals, and the reason why it is advisable they should be used only in exceptional circumstances by blacks, is that their use, by implication, gives rise to the view that the state is the source of redress and the state procedures are the means for fighting racialism. Nothing could be more of a snare. This state not simply practises racialism, it is based on the capitalist system which produced racialism in the first place, sustains racialism ideologically, and creates and constantly

re-creates, the **social** conditions in which racialism thrives. The whole ideological thrust of seeing the capitalist state — or some future reformed capitalist state — as the means to aid blacks fighting for a better life, and as the most important means for fighting racialism, is to divide racialism from capitalism, and thus the fight against racialism from the fight against capitalism. The fight against racialism now should not be deferred in favour of hypothetical or abstract fight against capitalism at some other time or place. But by the same token the fight against racialism should not limit itself to the fight to moderate racist practices within capitalism. If it does, then it turns itself from a fight against racialism into a containment of the social disruptions arising from racist definitions being applied in the context of an oppressive and exploiting social system.

## PROSPECTS

What of the prospects if this new Bill is implemented? The cuts have already undermined the financial allocation to combat what is called 'racial disadvantage'. The lay-offs and the non-employment of school-leavers are hitting blacks harder than whites, as companies employ "last in, first out" and covert "blacks out first" redundancy policies.

Racist biases in education are being moderated very little, if at all. The immigration controls and the racist immigration officers implementing them are a brutal affront to the dignity and rights of blacks in Britain. Dependants are being treated worse than cattle, and the black communities are getting more outspoken in their denunciation and protest against this racist treatment, which can only get worse. Police victimisations of blacks, despite police liaison committees, race relations police officials etc, are not decreasing.

Fascist attacks are on the increase and so is black resistance. The recent wave of anti-black press reporting has added to the scepticism of the blacks about the government's intentions. An important trend within the various black communities is politically opposed to being sucked into the race relations movement and is very concerned to expose the Race Relations industry to black workers.

In this situation, the Race Relations strategy, of which the Bill is a part, and which means the government being seen to be opening up equal opportunity, gaining greater support in the black communities themselves for racial discrimination management policies, ameliorating to a limited extent the bad housing conditions blacks are subjected to, gaining support in the

trade unions for their policies, etc. has a lot against it. But it has a lot going for it too. Firstly, it has a state at its disposal. Secondly, it possesses many branches and agents — unwitting or otherwise — in the trade unions and black communities. In the trade unions and black communities, the race relations management strategy opens up possibilities for revolutionaries as well as representing a danger. In the black communities, the dangers are more pronounced, for the race relations exponents are often radical and take up in a muted form issues like immigration control and airport harassment, allocation of funds etc. They will be encouraging the use of tribunals, the new commission etc. and threaten to shackle black resistance. But the black youth are as yet mainly uncommitted and with police harassment, racist attacks, bad housing, they are going to take a lot of convincing not to form the revolutionary and militant current inside the black communities.

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# The International

# Internationalism and the I-CL

"In our epoch, which is the epoch of imperialism, i.e. of world economy and world politics under the hegemony of finance capital, not a single Communist Party can establish its programme by proceeding solely or mainly from conditions and tendencies of development in its own country... On August 4th, 1914, the death-knell sounded for national programmes for all time". Thus wrote Trotsky in his theoretical demolition of the Stalinist programme of 'Socialism In One Country' ("The Third International After Lenin", p.4 Pathfinder ed.) He meant, of course, that the collapse of the Second International on the outbreak of world war revealed starkly and beyond possibility of serious denial, and in the most devastating way for socialism, what had already long been true — the bankruptcy of the Second International. That bankruptcy had found expression in accommodation by the major parties to 'their own' bourgeoisies within 'their own' national states. 1914 was only a matter of anointing the sacred union of the classes inside the states with the blood from the fratricidal slaughter of the proletarians of the warring imperialist nations.

Marxists had long understood that communism was a programme of international revolution or a utopian dream and a rationalist absurdity. Internationalism is implied by, and a necessary corollary of, the first premise of scientific Marxism. The proletariat, in liberating itself as a class, begins to liberate all humanity, for there is no class that it can exploit, and it can only own the means of production, created by capitalism, collectively. But something more is needed to ensure that a new exploitative minority will not eventually crystallise out of the victorious slaves of the old society and go on to establish and stabilise itself as a ruling class on the basis of collectivised economy, or of a reversion to the old order with a section of the former wage slaves replacing the former bourgeoisie. That prerequisite

is the possibility of material abundance. Only at a certain level of development of the means of production does the proletariat acquire the possibility of liberating humanity — at the level of a highly developed world capitalist economy.

This inherently international character of the socialist revolution on the one hand allowed the apparent anachronism of the seizure of power by the proletariat in a backward country, Russia, which, taken in isolation from world economic development, was certainly not ripe for transcending capitalism; and, on the other hand, is the basis for the possibility of a new communist order of society initiated by a class that can exploit no other class and can only own the means of production collectively. On the basis of the potential for material abundance which the already-developed world means of production open up if liberated from the limitations of capitalism, it becomes possible for the first time to create a society where men and women are free from the struggle for elementary means of subsistence and thus from struggling against others for scarce resources.

Long before Marx and Engels, the international brotherhood of the toilers was known and proclaimed as an ideal by democrats and socialists. Marx and Engels demonstrated its organic necessity if proletarian liberation was ever really to occur. The new system of equality would necessarily be a world society.

## THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL & ITS DEGENERATION

The revolutionary working class movement has attempted therefore to organise itself as an International army.

After the collapse of the Second International, Communists organised the Third International, constructed to be free of the defects that destroyed the Second and to function in a new epoch with world revolution immediately on the agenda. However, the unevenness and contradictoriness that had allowed the proletariat to win power in a Russia unripe for socialist transformation now asserted itself against the interests of revolution.

Isolated by the defeat of revolutions in the west, backward Russia took its revenge on the revolutionaries. Through the weakness, blindness and unprincipled factionalism of a section of the revolutionary party (Zinoviev-Stalin), Lenin's party was swamped in a sea of careerists (the Lenin Levy). Instead of proving the bastion against regression, it became the breeding ground out of which a new privileged elite emerged in Russia. An elite opposed to revolution, and which wrecked the Communist International as a revolutionary force — transforming every section of it where it could keep a grip into an instrument of counter-revolution.

A minority of communists around Trotsky, Rakovsky, and others, began the work of creating a new International. Primarily, their work was to rescue the banner and ideological foundations of the Communist International from the Stalinist bureaucrats who used the name and banner of the Communist International to dupe millions of would-be revolutionary workers. Of course, rescuing the fundamental communist programme and perspectives meant consistently developing them in face of new events such as the rise of fascism — and of Stalinism itself. This was achieved more or less adequately by Trotsky.

Unable to reorientate the masses of communist workers to action on a communist programme, the Trotskyist movement succeeded

brilliantly in defending and developing the ideological bedrock for a mass communist international. In 1938 the Trotskyist current founded the World Party of Socialist Revolution (Fourth International) as a small international party whose right to exist had been established by the soundness of the theoretical arsenal of which it was the sole custodian. The weapons in that arsenal, the codifications of the Communist International and the analyses of Trotsky, were more or less adequate to guide and lead the revolutionary workers to victory.

## AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

But the Trotskyists remained isolated. In 1940, Trotsky, the intellectual dynamo of the Fourth International, the living memory and embodiment of the knowledge, experience and revolutionary will of two generations of the world's revolutionaries, including those whom he, with Lenin, had led to conquer state power in 1917, was murdered by a Stalinist agent. Simultaneously, in the war, reality threw up new qualities.

Every defeated revolution generates new permutations in the forces engaged in it, on one side or the other. So it was with the defeated revolutions of 1848. So too, and more so, with the consequences of the wave of defeats that had continued uninterrupted for the two decades before Trotsky's death. The bureaucracy in Russia consolidated itself in the 1930s as a force with far more independence, stability, and durability than all previous projections indicated it could have. Surviving the onslaught of the Nazis, partly because of the ferociously racist character of the invasion of the country of the Slavs, deemed subhuman by the Nazis, the bureaucracy emerged intact and helped capitalism restore itself in Western Europe, using the Communist Parties as its instruments.

Expanding into Eastern Europe, by agreement with imperialism the bureaucracy remodelled a series of states as replicas of Russian Stalinist society. Russia became one of the two world super-powers — and one of the twin pillars of world reaction.

In Yugoslavia after 1943, Albania in 1944-5, and China after 1946, indigenous CPs took power and carried through anti-capitalist revolutions. Speaking of Russia in the 1870s, Marx had speculated on a possibility of Russia 'leaping over' a stage in history straight into socialist relations of production — on condition that there was a proletarian revolution in advanced Europe to act as aid, guide and model. The peasant armies in China, led by ex-Communists, who took power in 1948-9, entered into a relationship with Russia that allowed them to act, spectacularly, contrary to all previous experience of such movements. But its guide and model, which gave it very grudging aid indeed, was the totalitarian police state, the degenerated workers' state of the USSR.

Nevertheless a society identical in structure was also the final result — not the product of political counter-revolution, as in Russia, but — in China and elsewhere — of mutant revolutionary victories. Meanwhile, beginning with the war-time economic boom, and then the post-war replacement and Korean war booms, capitalism took off into an expansionary explosion that lasted for decades. A new floor was inserted under the parties of reformism in the working class movement.

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## AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

But the Trotskyists remained isolated. In 1940, Trotsky, the intellectual dynamo of the Fourth International, the living memory and embodiment of the knowledge, experience and revolutionary will of two generations of the world's revolutionaries, including those whom he, with Lenin, had led to conquer state power in 1917, was murdered by a Stalinist agent. Simultaneously, in the war, reality threw up new qualities.

Every defeated revolution generates new permutations in the forces engaged in it, on one side or the other. So it was with the defeated revolutions of 1848. So too, and more so, with the consequences of the wave of defeats that had continued uninterruptedly for the two decades before Trotsky's death. The bureaucracy in Russia consolidated itself in the 1930s as a force with far more independence, stability, and durability than all previous projections indicated it could have. Surviving the onslaught of the Nazis, partly because of the ferociously racist character of the invasion of the country of the Slavs, deemed subhuman by the Nazis, the bureaucracy emerged intact and helped capitalism restore itself in Western Europe, using the Communist Parties as its instruments.

Expanding into Eastern Europe, by agreement with Imperialism the bureaucracy remodelled a series of states as replicas of Russian Stalinist society. Russia became one of the two world super-powers — and one of the twin pillars of world reaction.

In Yugoslavia after 1943, Albania in 1944-5, and China after 1946, indigenous CPs took power and carried through anti-capitalist revolutions. Speaking of Russia in the 1870s, Marx had speculated on a possibility of Russia 'leaping over' a stage in history straight into socialist relations of production — on condition that there was a proletarian revolution in advanced Europe to act as aid, guide and model. The peasant armies in China, led by ex-Communists, who took power in 1948-9, entered into a relationship with Russia that allowed them to act, spectacularly, contrary to all previous experience of such movements. But its guide and model, which gave it very grudging aid indeed, was the totalitarian police state, the degenerated workers' state of the USSR.

Nevertheless a society identical in structure was also the final result — not the product of political counter-revolution, as in Russia, but — in China and elsewhere — of mutant revolutionary victories. Meanwhile, beginning with the war-time economic boom, and then the post-war replacement and Korean war booms, capitalism took off into an expansionary explosion that lasted for decades. A new floor was inserted under the parties of reformism in the working class movement.

## THE DEFORMED WORKERS' STATES

The dilemma was real — revolutions had taken place. In the 1930s Trotsky had referred to 'snobs' who 'rejected' the living revolution in Russia because they disapproved of its obnoxious features — contrasting them with the philistines who approved of much and thus felt obliged to endorse or minimise the other features. The philistine approach has been the one adopted by the post-Second World Congress 'Fourth International'. Criticising in the manner of giving advice to those in power, it has, for good anti-snob, anti-sectarian, "support the actual revolution" reasons, been unwilling to adopt, as a stable element in its programme for the deformed workers' states, the perspective of political revolution.

Willing and eager to recognise the 'appearance' of new 'workers' states' as vindication of its belief that this is the epoch of world revolution, it has virtually lost sight of the working class in these states — **abandoning** as operational parts of its programme, that is, deleting from its real active programme, the heart and soul of any communist organisation — many of the central and basic norms of communism: for if the Chinese deformed workers' state was ever anything other than a grotesque mutant after 1949, what on earth had communists been talking about for over 100 years?

Endorsement of the Titoist, Maoist, Ho-ist, Castroist "teams" has also been the experience of the FI, usually in the form of "if they would do such and such adopt this policy, cease doing that.... then....". And unfortunately it has not been a **pedagogic** technique for talking to certain communist-minded workers.

But these adaptations have been unstable, and the USFI has never been a mere satellite of any of the bureaucratic forces it has adapted to, never organically tied to them to the extent of losing freedom to jump clear at some point. And in 1967 the USFI corrected itself on China. It was a correction without self-criticism; indeed, Livio Maitan's analyses, and the 10th world congress documents, talk of the **degenerated** Chinese workers' state! But why is the lapse on China worse than the social-patriotic error of 1940, of which the International, reorganising itself in 1944, purged itself through self-criticism?

Firstly, the self-criticism of 1944 related the error to a rock-solid norm of our movement; and the 1940 error has not been repeated. Secondly, there has not been self-criticism on the Stalinist states. The USFI's positions — Maitan's, certainly — imply they were **right** on China. Thirdly, they appear **incapable** of learning.

The Tito experience was new, and there were many impressive experiments in Yugoslavia after 1948. That the same approach was, after the Tito experience, adopted for China and Vietnam indicates not a lapse but a definite pattern of accommodation, rooted in the absence of a stable analysis of Stalinism (there is decadent logic-chopping instead); in the absence of a coherent theory of the workers' states (there are a wide number of distinct theories under the umbrella label 'deformed workers' state'); in a commitment, above all, to a semi-mystical belief in this as the epoch of world revolution. It is **the** revolutionary epoch, and as good anti-sectarians we learn from it, even to the extent of forgetting the norms of communism as Marx, Engels, Lenin and the early Fourth International understood them.

And, the norms being destroyed, accommodation has not been confined to the Stalinist bureaucracies of the deformed workers' states created by indigenous revolutions.

### VULGAR EVOLUTIONISM

'Accommodation to Stalinism' is a common charge against the USFI from sectarians. From the Healy current it is completely incoherent — as witness their own **pro-Maoist** period in 1967. IS, with its own shibboleth, the state-capitalist theory, to peddle, seems to have more basis. But their theory adds, literally, nothing at all to the programme for working-class revolution in the Soviet Union worked out by Trotsky from the premise of Russia being a degenerated workers' state. And IS do not apply their theory seriously outside Russia. When the NLF won in Vietnam, IS was found just demagogically cheering, while **Workers' Fight**, the former workers'-statist tendency of IS, reacted critically, and looked to the proletarian-revolutionary tasks of the future.

'Accommodation to Stalinism' is a true charge — a lot of empirical evidence can be adduced — but a gross and one-sided oversimplification. It simply **misses the point** about what happened to the FI after world war 2, and its essential sickness — vulgar evolutionism.

If, in 1948, despite bombastic assertions and rhetoric, the comrades saw the perspectives of the 1938 Fourth International routed because of the organisational weakness of the FI, and the 'world revolution' run into a cul-de-sac, the Tito/Stalin break, and then the victory of the peasant armies in China, opened up **new** perspectives. The intervention of the Chinese army in Korea against US Imperialist aggression, in December 1950, decided the leaders of the FI that a whole new surge forward was opening up. The epoch was, after all, asserting itself. But what role for the Fourth International? What role for the working class?

The essence of the situation from 1950 onwards can be summed up thus: looking back seven years, the FI saw a whole series of revolutions, organised by the Russian Stalinist army or autonomously; looking forward, the prospect was for new struggles and probably victories. The prospect of a third world war was brought forward sharply by the Korean conflict. What role could the West European CPs play with the Soviet Union involved, except to support it? World War 3 would be an international civil war. 'History' was on the move again — but the Trotskyists not only were not central; at best they were the **seed** of some future ripening of genuine socialism.

'The Revolution' had been happening since 1943 and the 'blinker-ed dogmatists' hadn't noticed; we must learn from past mistakes and **integrate ourselves** into it — so reasoned the 'anti-sectarians' from 1948-9 onwards. From that date — probably the decisive turning point was Dec. 1950 — the Trotskyists **related** to a 'world revolutionary process'; previously seeing themselves as central, they now increasingly became commentators & political weatherforecasters.

It is possible to take world analysis documents (for example, comrade Michel Pablo's "Where Are We Going?") which are modelled on the approach and structure of the documents of the Communist International, especially Trotsky's, and pinpoint exactly what

is different: the **protagonist** is no longer the conscious force, the revolutionaries and the working class. The **protagonist** is History itself, the processes, the trends. 'The Revolution' is a drawn-out process, an intensified evolution. The distinction between evolution and revolution, indeed, becomes meaningless.

Vulgar evolutionism differs from a dialectical view of evolution in denying that the evolutionary process culminates in a sharp revolutionary leap, as nine months' pregnancy culminates in a qualitative break. In the early '50s the 3rd World War — the War-Revolution — was considered inevitable (and many present-day critics of the USFI, including the leaders of IS and the WRP, accepted this). History was marching along that path. Everything else — the Korean war, for example — was part of the process leading to and through that cataclysm. And that process **was** the Revolution. Moreover, if the process could find expression in certain CPs, why not also, up to a point, in mass social-democratic parties like the Belgian or the British (in left social democratic Bevanism, quaintly called a centrist current!). Or in nationalist movements like the Bolivian MNR or the Algerian FLN? Why not indeed?

A dialectical Marxist view would expect the pressures of capitalist reality or of war to find expression in these areas too, of course. But whereas the Trotskyists before the Second World Congress saw the revolution as a matter of reorienting the working class vanguard and would have intervened to build their own organisations, seeing them as an essential prerequisite for victory, after 1950 it became a matter of spotting the trends — which could, and maybe would, succeed at least in good part without us. Since this is hardly a congenial view for subjective revolutionaries, it has not uniformly produced passive accommodation, but also, and quite logically, adventurist, ultra-left, "win the Revolution" binges.

Not least because of failure to relate what had occurred in the Stalinist states to our proletarian norms, what had been done to what needed to be done, ideological chaos ensued. The Chinese peasant CP had overthrown capitalism — of course it wasn't Stalinist! Scholasticism did service to square the circles and round off the triangles.

### THE USFI 'BUILDS THE PARTY' — BUT HOW & FOR WHAT?

The slanderers of the USFI trend say it abandons the struggle for the revolutionary party. An absurdity — on the formal level. Yet when J P Cannon, in the 1953 split, said that his opponents had removed from 'Trotskyism' what Lenin had contributed to its foundations, he did get at the essence of the situation. A party, even a very big, well-organised and imposing party, which does not see itself as essential, which does not always see the working class and the fight for working class independence as central, has essentially broken with Leninism. A "workers' party" which does not have a programme for the working class living in one or other of the totalitarian Stalinist states — that is no Leninist party, and revulsion at the crude stupidities and slanders of the WRP should not blind us to the fact.

Vulgar evolutionism **together with** continued attempts to **intervene** and build revolutionary organisations has a debilitating logic. The Trotskyists of 1940 boldly counterposed themselves to whatever they believed contradicted their programme — because they believ-

ed their programme to be a **pre-requisite**, an essential. After 1950 what status did the programme have? Desirable, the 'blueprint' for the future, the transitional programme containing key demands for essential struggles — yes. But if the Revolution is happening anyway, and a reasonable facsimile of what the Trotskyists want can be the result, then what need for intransigence?

The task is to 'integrate', to gain mass influence even by ideological accommodation. The programme shifts and changes accordingly. Intransigence, which Trotsky considered an essential attribute, becomes a positive liability. This was especially so, and took on a momentum it has never lost, under pressure of the impending world war 3. Urgency, urgency, and more urgency was the keynote — otherwise the Trotskyists would be left on the sidelines of the evolution/Revolution.

The failure coldly to assess the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions also inescapably produced an erosion of the norms of Trotskyism. The end product, especially in the areas where entry into the Social Democracy was practised (Britain, Belgium, Germany...) was a large-scale rebirth of the 'La Commune' syndrome of a current in 1930s French Trotskyism — the seeking after influence and numbers and 'integration' on the basis of shedding much of the programme of Trotskyism. That is, in the final analysis and inescapably, in the service of another programme. The Healy tendency in the early '50s in Britain, the pioneering model of 'deep entry', was roughly a more pro-Stalinist version of today's "Tribune".

These characteristics, established in the early '50s, have continued and developed in changing conditions. Ever seeking the flood tide, the high peak of capitalist prosperity found the FI still expecting mass radicalisations in the social-democratic and Stalinist parties. When the mass left-reformist ('centrist') currents didn't emerge, they tried to organise it, themselves gallantly filling the political gap by largely confining themselves to the programme such a movement would be likely to have. They avoided the vulgar catastrophism of the Healy tendency, but throughout the capitalist boom never made more than a current progress report on the state of capitalism. This largely contributed to their inability to orientate adequately.

The proto-IMG in Britain were still doing that, with "The Week", as late as 1968. Thereafter they chased after another will o' the wisp, the student movement, leaving IS to grasp the potential of working class recruits. The IMG is now apparently getting ready for a new venture in the same line as "The Week", with its "class struggle left wing" orientation.

### THE CRISIS OF OUR MOVEMENT

No stable or coherent analysis; no stable revolutionary programme for all of the states of the Stalinist type; a response to Stalinism's expansion by a self-abnegating relapse to a grotesquely mechanical stress on "the epoch of revolution", mechanical and semi-mystical at the same time; the concomitant development of a vulgar evolutionism which spread from the response to Stalinist expansion into every field of work; loss of communist norms arising both from the lack of a clinical analysis of what has been done and needs to be done in various deformed workers' states and from the adapt-

ationism implicit in vulgar evolutionism; a record of incapacity to know which hour of the political clock it is; chronic political instability. These are the features of the post-1940s FI.

Inescapably such a history has resulted in a massive number of splits and sediment groups left behind as 'The International' or a section makes some zig or zag. In Britain, the WRP, Militant, Institute for Workers' Control are all such. Even the IMG of 1972 is now a ghostly little cult around one C Marshall, calling itself the Revolutionary Marxist Current! A movement in such chaos, especially after so long in such a condition, is unlikely to produce a healthy opposition from within itself or to self-regenerate. Instead it produces tendencies which fetishise one or other discarded tactic; over-react and simply invert one phase; take some aspect of the FI to caricature extremes (the Posadas tendency, for example, reduced vulgar evolutionism to sheer clinical lunacy) — or else quack denunciations which testify to little but the state of mind of the denouncers.

Such are the "anti-Pabloites".

Some or all of the diseases of post-Trotsky 'Trotskyism' are laid at the door of Michel Pablo, secretary of the FI for 15 years. But those problems sum up a situation of a movement, faced after world war 2 with ideologically regenerating itself, which failed to do so adequately; and all the anti-Pabloites emerge from that movement in the period of its crisis **without** having freed themselves from its essential features. Thus the 'cures' they purvey are worse, almost invariably, than the disease; and the USFI is 'better', more politically and intellectually serious in attempting to deal with the problems of the movement, than any of them.

Either the whole history of the movement since the death of Trotsky is reviewed and assayed according to its strengths then and the changes in the world since — in which case that history might sensibly be called the history of 'Pabloism' or 'Mandelism' or whatever, were the term 'Pabloism' not irredeemably tainted by the use made of it by its chief champions. Or else you get hysterical squabbles **within the essential tradition of the broken-backed 'Trotskyism' that had lost belief in itself after 1948** and nothing is possible but demonology — the 'evil Pablo' theory of post-war Trotskyism.

Whether it is accomplished by lying and distortion on the breathtaking scale of the SLL/WRP and OCI, or is an honest but futile attempt by ex-WRP tendencies like the WSL to lift themselves up by their bootlaces, is of secondary importance. A thorough critical analysis of the **whole** history is less comfortable, but it is the **only serious** approach. It is the I-CL's approach.

### THE I-CL AND BUILDING A MARXIST INTERNATIONAL

If the USFI were a mass International with roots in the working class such as the Second and Third Internationals had, the argument so far would tell us nothing whatsoever about whether the I-CL should be part of the USFI. The USFI is, however, an ideological formation, a **propaganda** International with pathetically weak roots. The standards by which revolutionaries relate to a 3rd International, even in its degeneration, and to the USFI, must be radically different.

To the argument that only if there is a radical break such as 1914 or 1933 is organisational separation necessary, the answer is — separation from what? The USFI — however much bigger it is than the I-CL — is a small propaganda group, whose programme is gross-

ly inadequate, often pernicious, and, in the case of certain deformed workers' states at different times, anti-Trotskyist. Moreover, the pretence that a Trotskyist international exists is itself pernicious. We need to re-lay the programmatic basis for such an International. To lend credence to the pretensions of the USFI is to militate against doing that.

In addition, for the I-CL, it would mean taking up an existence as a propaganda group inside the IMG while purveying the often pernicious politics of that organisation publicly.

■ ■ ■

Nevertheless the I-CL feels a heavy responsibility for international work. There is no communism without internationalism. We want to discuss with the comrades of the USFI, which we consider the mainstream of the current emerging from the movement of Lenin and Trotsky, honestly and seriously. We have approached them for such discussions. At present they apparently refuse, saying that we must first withdraw our characterisation of the USFI as centrist — that is, that we must accept a priori their self-proclaimed political authority; that the conclusion of the discussion must be settled before its opening! We print here the USFI's document dealing with relations with the I-CL, and our reply, together with material on the Vietnamese question which epitomises the central difference between us and the USFI: that is, independent working class action in the deformed workers' states.

■ ■ ■

In addition, we have for some years participated in conferences organised by the Lutte Ouvrière group in France — a tendency which is both distant from us on many crucial political questions, and far less central to post-Trotsky 'Trotskyism' than the USFI; but a tendency, nevertheless, which is honest, serious, and in many ways an entirely distinctive current within post-Trotsky 'Trotskyism'. In *International Communist* 4 we shall be publishing material reflecting our debates with LO.

■ ■ ■

Also we have joined the 'Necessary International Initiative', a framework for discussion involving German, Austrian, and Italian comrades. It is no more than a framework, based on known limited agreement and commitment to test possibilities of further agreement, and we stress that.

Our international contacts are vital and important. But if our basic analysis is right, it follows that they are seen in the context of the job of ideologically re-working the legacy of post-war 'Trotskyism'; and, apart from exchange of information and experience, will be valuable primarily to the degree that they contribute to that ideological work. A (voluntarily) nationally-isolated existence is incompatible with communism. But so would be an attempt to construct the facade of an international tendency from international contacts (however promising) at forced-march pace, without adequate or serious attention to the tasks of ideological regeneration. Such impatience — super-internationalist in appearance, and even in subjective intention — is at root nationalist, because reflecting a federalist view of an international. Just as a proletarian party is defined by a proletarian programme, not by a proletarian social

composition, so also an international tendency is an international tendency because of its international programme, not because of containing groupings from different countries.

The impatience can also be nationalist in another sense: if the root of the impatience is national problems, and inadequately-founded international ventures are used as a deus ex machina to solve those national problems.

'Reconstruct the Fourth International' is a childish cry, implying that what we are to reconstruct is an already-defined or mapped-out object. The whole problem is that we have to 'reconstruct' not only the International, but the answer to the question: **what, politically, is the International?**; that is, what is the revolutionary international programme? Thus the call 'reconstruct the Fourth International' means, usually — and logically — organisational carpentry. Those — like our NII comrades — who wish to use that call to mean programmatic as well as organisational reconstruction chose a slogan which — according to strict and precise interpretation — belongs much more properly with the various 'International Committee' offshoots which originated it and who do take it to mean just organisational re-assembling.

The questions dealt with in this introduction — the tempo and tasks of resolving the crisis of revolutionary communism; the slogan 'reconstruct the Fourth International'; the question of whether the decisive crisis of the Fourth International must be dated from the late '40s, or — as some comrades in the International Initiative hold — from the beginning of world war 2; the scientific value or otherwise of the concept 'Pabloism' — are all part of the debate and discussion we are carrying on within the NII, which is also reflected in the "*International Discussion Bulletin*" of the International Initiative. Here we reproduce the I-CL's resolution on adhering to the NII, and a debate between the I-CL and the Spartacusbund on the question of the Workers' Government in relation to Portugal.

■ ■ ■

We approach these discussions without the blustering pretensions of the various self-proclaimed 'Internationals', and also without the philistinism of those who believe that the whole history of attempts to defend and regenerate the international-communist programme in the post-war period is some sort of petty-bourgeois academic diversion. The basis for a democratic-centralist International does not exist; it must be created. The USFI itself must soon demonstrate this as the de facto federal content of this seriously divided organisation finally brings the organisational forms into line with the content, through a split.

It would be better if the USFI admitted the reality that it is a federation, and thus cleared away a major barrier to a free exchange of political views (as opposed to organisational-diplomatic fencing) with groups like Lutte Ouvrière, the I-CL, etc — that is, the pretence that it can have the authority of a democratic-centralist International, a pretence built into the fraudulent claim that the USFI constitutes an adequate or even a homogeneous political tendency.

# I-CL AND THE USFI

Excerpts from the United Secretariat resolution, "Relations with Trotskyist organisations or groups claiming to be Trotskyist which are outside the Fourth International" (3-4/7/76).

*In determining relations with all political forces, including those which are Trotskyist or which claim to be Trotskyist, the FI must be guided not by subjective impressions but by objective political characterisations. It is necessary to clearly distinguish between those forces which we characterise as revolutionary and those we do not, and between those which characterise the FI as revolutionary and those who do not, and in each case our tactics and relations must reflect this fact and situation....*

*... There are a large number of organisations claiming to Trotskyism in Britain. Along the criteria outlined above, however, we may distinguish the following broad categories:*

*(i) Organisations which prima facie must be characterised as revolutionary and which regard the FI as a revolutionary organisation (Workers League, Chartists, League for Socialist Action). To these currents, we should seek to maintain the same essential relations as outlined with Lutte Ouvriere above, i.e. we should seek to involve them in the activity of the International, invite them to conferences of the sections, supply them with International Discussion Bulletins subject to the usual conditions, discuss their making a submission to the discussion for the World Congress...*

*(ii) An organisation which should be characterised as Trotskyist but which maintains strongly contradictory characterisations of the FI — characterising it even within the same documents as the "mainstream of Trotskyism" and as not being Trotskyist and*

*having betrayed the Trotskyist programme in favour of Brandlerism — is the International-Communist League. The nature of this contradiction, and the tactics to be pursued in relation to it, must be more closely determined by the IMG, but, for the moment, we cannot enter into the same type of relations with the I-CL as with the organisations in point 7(i)...*

*Letter from the I-CL to the USFI, 30 September 1976.*

We thank you for sending us a copy of the USFI Resolution on "Relations with Trotskyist Organisations".

In reply we want to make some brief points of clarification re: the I-CL position on your organisation and also some political comments.

Firstly, in your comments on our organisation's characterisation of the USFI you miss the point. There is no contradiction in saying, as we do, that the USFI is *both* the mainstream emerging from the movement for the FI and the FI founded by Trotsky and that in its positions *over the last 28 years* on a supplementary workers' revolution (political revolution) in various deformed workers' states — taken as a whole and judged over the period since the second World Congress — can only be characterised as Brandlerite. (We refer to Brandlerism on this and no other questions or positions held by the Brandlerites.)

One can point to any member of your or our organisation and say truthfully that he or she is part of the biological mainstream going back to certain forms of fish life, and beyond. That is not to say that that person is a fish! You are the mainstream; but your positions (for different countries and at different times) on the central questions for certain countries is antagonistic to the programme of the historic Trotskyism.

You are the mainstream — but of a movement which very largely failed in the task posed to it by the emergence of the deformed workers' states: the task of ideological self-regeneration.

The I-CL considers itself part of this movement and certainly does not pretend to have solved the problems of the post-war movement. However, we insist on defining the situation as one of massive unsolved problems. To pretend that what needs to be

done is already done is to militate against doing it; and we can find no other explanation than the fact that basic problems remain unsolved, for the repeated lapses of the USFI on these questions, e.g. on Vietnam today.

Of course we do not consider the USFI the worst tendency on these questions; the post-'63 "orthodox Trotskyists" have more than once "out-Pabloed" the people they insist on calling by the meaningless political term Pabloism. Nor does the I-CL deny that it stand politically on many positions developed by your tendency — on the contrary, we say so publicly. But for you to pick up alleged contradictions between calling you the mainstream and yet Brandlerite is either a fault of comprehension (which may be entirely the fault of our text) or else decadent and politically pointless logic-chopping. It is not the road to a serious political discussion.

Trotskyism, fully armed and adequate politically and programmatically, is a historical category that disappeared, because the world which its forces were too weak to change according to its programme evolved in strange, and essentially unforeseen, permutations. "Trotskyism" evolved as a series of political mutations after 1948. Today's "Trotskyists", standing on the great tradition of the common roots of our tendencies, have still to regenerate the movement that suffered such tremendous blows in the 1940s.

To say that, and then settle down to a study circle existence, would be an abandonment of the class struggle. But to pretend, as your tendency does, that the situation is just fine, is, deliberately or otherwise, to perpetuate a fraud and erect the *organisation and name* of the FI into an essentially a-political shibboleth. Since politics is central, such an approach can in the long term only lead to the failure and collapse of the work you and we are attempting.

Your very attempt at defining your relations with "other Trotskyists" illustrates this. Apparently it is the name "Trotskyism" that matters! It is hard to see what — other than the concept of democratic centralism, which is very largely fictitious (at least between the two main trends in the USFI) — separates you from the "family of Trotskyism" conception of Lutte Ouvriere, according to which even the scoundrels who dominate the OCI are... Trotskyists.

Comrades, the I-CL characterisation of your tendency as Brandlerite on the question of the deformed workers' states may very well imply a programme of attempting to break up the existing framework of the USFI. For now and the foreseeable future, we think it demands dialogue and discussion with you. (And with other tendencies: we have decided to engage in the Necessary International Initiative grouping, explicitly differentiating ourselves

from the foundation text.

For you to demand of us that we call you Trotskyist as a precondition for any close dialogue is ultimistic and rather childish. That serious people should comply with a demand for political self-disavowal is anyway unthinkable. The word Trotskyist is one which we use colloquially. Apart from that, in any scientific or precise sense, it should be used very sparingly indeed. In precise terms we think it would be presumptuous to consider the I-CL Trotskyist — though self-evidently we think ourselves nearer the programme of Trotskyism and the early FI than we think you to be. You, like the I-CL, are Trotskyists in the colloquial sense, and we have no objection to calling you such. In our conference documents, however, we insist on attempting to be scientifically rigorous.

We ask you to talk with us about the substance of our disagreements and not about words. We formally propose that you discuss with the I-CL on the same terms as with the organisations itemised in your point 7(i).

If you require any formal declaration from us that we do not consider you counter-revolutionary, do consider you subjectively revolutionary, etc, there should be no problem from our side. Our attitude has nothing in common with those of the "anti-Pabloites" who, in asserting that the USFI departs from Trotskyism, allege that it is counter-revolutionary, consciously seeking to liquidate the cadres of Trotskyism, etc, and who counterpose the sectarian tradition of the 'International Committee' as the true tradition of Trotskyism.

Fraternally, *Sean Matgamna*, for the I-CL.

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# VIETNAM

*Appeal to the Tenth World Congress of the USFI, from the Bolshevik-Leninist group of Vietnam.*

*THE BOLSHEVIK-LENINIST group of Vietnam (BLV) sends you its fraternal greetings and wishes the Congress great success in keeping with our great hopes.*

*We know that serious subjects are presently being discussed in the International, especially the Vietnamese problem. We deeply regret that for material reasons (date of the Congress became known too late, passports, visas...) the BLV is absent from your debates. We regret it all the more because our group does not have the same positions as the International nor the comrades of the opposition. We could contribute original ideas as Vietnamese Trotskyists, having been able to read many Vietnamese documents hardly known outside of the country.*

*Our BLV group was constituted as a section of the International in 1947, by joining the International. It has a long history behind it. It was our group that had successfully led, during the 1946-53 period, the movement of 20,000 emigrant workers in France... Our group was able to resist the most brutal repression of French imperialism during the first war in Vietnam.*

*...a small group remains in France and carries on in spite of a thousand difficulties. It is the present defender of Vietnamese Trotskyist traditions and ideas.*

*Although for tactical reasons we don't officially identify ourselves in our press as Trotskyists, all the Vietnamese political circles in France know of our existence, especially the North Vietnamese ruling circles. We are seeking to constantly intervene in the struggle against American imperialism through all sorts of actions taking many different forms.*

*In the very special historical conditions in Vietnam, where the enormous weight of the VCP ["Vietnamese Communist Party"] crushes all the organisations to its left, maintaining a Trotskyist group, even a propaganda group, is an extremely difficult task. We have been able to do this during these last years with no help whatsoever from the International or from the Ligue Communiste.*

*In the political debate now unfolding in the International, we note two opposite errors. The first consists of prettying up the VCP to the point of labelling it a Revolutionary Party, thus forgetting the entire past historical development of this party, and not taking into account its present opportunistic and empirical policy which could cause serious setbacks for the Vietnamese Revolution. The second error is wanting at all costs to stick to the old schemas and refusing to see the evolution of this party in the new conditions and the fact that it has successfully led the national liberation struggle.*

*The BLV group is constantly careful not to fall into either of the two errors. It constantly attempts to keep in touch with reality, to understand it and to draw the lessons from it for action, never losing sight of the fundamental principles of Trotskyism and Leninism.*

*Comrades,*

*We request that you make our existence known to the sections and that you debate out the following questions.*

*1) Should the International concern itself with a Vietnamese Trotskyist group which has remained loyal to the International and which has carried on against great obstacles, in the most difficult of conditions?*

*2) Should we work towards the creation of a section of the Fourth International in Vietnam?*

*An answer to these two questions would already resolve half the debate under way on the Vietnamese problem.*

*Our very fraternal greetings,  
the BLVG.*

*February 5, 1974.*

*Reproduced from "Workers' Vanguard", 4 July 1975.*



*Letter from the I-CL to the USFI, 9 November 1976.*

**WE ARE WRITING** to inquire about your policy on the building of a Trotskyist organisation in Vietnam. The analysis defended by Pierre Rousset and many other leading figures of the USFI, according to which the VCP is an 'empirical revolutionary party' and has assimilated the principal elements of the theory of permanent revolution in relation to Vietnam, leaves little role for the building of such an organisation. And none of the documents of the USFI, to our knowledge, are clear on the question. The most

that can be found is a reference in the December 1972 IEC plenum resolution, on the role of revolutionary Marxists in "deepening the permanent revolution in South Vietnam and helping it attain final victory".

The comrades who produce the journal "Quan Sat" have assured us that the document published in *Workers' Vanguard*, 4 July 1975, is theirs.

We have made inquiries from the IMG and the LCR to check on that document's charges that the USFI is giving no assistance to the building of a Vietnamese Trotskyist organisation. We have received no clear reply from the IMG. Comrade Vergeat of the LCR, however, in a recent discussion, told one of our comrades that the USFI did in fact assist the Vietnamese group, but that it did not publish any of the statements of that group because of a general USFI security ruling against the publication of the documents of Trotskyist groups in deformed workers' states.

This argument, in our opinion, raises several grave questions.

1. How does translating and publishing a document in French, English, etc create more security problems than publishing it in Vietnamese?

2. The LCR, at least, believes that Vietnam is a workers' state where the bureaucratic deformations are reformable. How can that position be reconciled with saying that security reasons prevent the widespread publication of any document of the Vietnamese Trotskyists?

3. Meanwhile security reasons do not stop the USFI from giving wide publicity to the activities of your section in, for example, the police state of Spain.

4. The USFI — correctly, in our view — gives wide publicity to the declarations of many non-Trotskyist oppositionists in the USSR and the deformed workers' states. Why not do as much for USFI supporters in those states?

We are writing to inquire whether — assuming we have understood and reported comrade Vergeat's position correctly — that is a correct representation of the position of the USFI; if not, what the USFI's position is; in any case, what the reasons for the USFI's position are.

Fraternally, C. Reynolds, for the I-CL.

# THE 'INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE'

Declaration on the 'Necessary International Initiative', adopted by the National Committee of the International-Communist League, 24th September 1976.

*The I-CL declares its participation in the framework of the International Initiative on the basis of:*

1. *agreement on major programmatic questions concerning the Portuguese experience;*

2. *agreement on certain points concerning the Fourth International:*

— *that no FI exists in the tradition of Trotsky's FI;*

— *that communists must work to build an International in the tradition of Trotsky's FI;*

— *that this task requires not only organisational reconstruction but also programmatic regeneration.*

*In participating in the 'International Initiative' framework — which is not a democratic-centralist international tendency — we do not hide the serious disagreements on the analysis of the crisis of the Fourth International expressed in our amendments to the 'International Initiative'. We reject the view that the political/ideological collapse of the Fourth International took place early in the Second World War; and we consider the concept of 'Pabloism' meaningless and misleading.*

*Equally we do not ignore the possibility that these analytical disagreements may turn out to correspond to programmatic disagreements rendering systematic collaboration impossible. However, that possibility is to be determined as the outcome of discussions and collaboration, not erected as a block to such discussions.*

# Debate:

## WORKERS' GOVERNMENT AND PORTUGAL

From "Spartacus" no. 28  
[June 1976].

THE FOG AROUND the presidential elections in June is becoming clearer. So far there are 5 candidates for the office of President: leading them all, the 'hero of 25th November', General Eanes, who can count on support ranging from the CDS to the PS; the 'admiral without fear' and incumbent Prime Minister, Pinheiro de Azevedo, and the CP, which originally flirted with the idea of supporting Eanes, is surprisingly putting up the civilian and one-time CP speaker in the Constituent Assembly, Octavio Pato. Furthermore, Fernando Macedo de Sousa is standing for the PCP-ML, and Arlete Vieira da Silva as joint (!) candidate of the LCI and PRT [\*1]. The attempt by several extreme left

organisations — particularly PRP and MES — to put up the bankrupt Otelo de Carvalho as a candidate seems in all probability to be doomed to failure. These organisations seem rather to be endeavouring to put up their own candidates — significantly after the CP put up their own party candidate — which however does not exclude a surprise; if Otelo has a striking characteristic it is his vacillation and inconsistency [\*2].

The importance of the presidential election is in respect to the coming formation of a government; the prime minister will be named by the president. In the present political situation in Portugal revolutionaries cannot ignore the discussions around the presidential elections, in this discussion all political conflicts come to a head. Their outcome is not of little

date in the presidential elections, whose main propaganda content would be the tactic developed above. It is obvious that within this considerable prominence must be given to denouncing the support of the SP for the candidate of the 25th November, Eanes, as we would attack support for any 'prominent' soldier, since this is an expression of the reformists' ties to the military bonapartism of the MFA. According to all the information we have so far, support for the (civilian) CP candidate Pato will be necessary in the second round (provided he reaches it) [\*3]. Pato will be a candidate of a CP-PS unity, which is seen by the Stalinists as a unity within the bounds of a Popular Front,\*but which is the unity in the struggle for their class interests in the eyes of large sections of the working class. Revolutionaries must relate to this contradiction between the expectations of the masses and the treacherous intentions of their leaderships, and not stand on the side-lines in sectarian fashion.

ion. Revolutionaries can vote for Pato together with large sections of workers, and thus for CP-SP unity. They will only do this **on the basis of their programme** which formulates the fundamental interests of the class, and as a **consequence** of this programme they will **uncompromisingly** oppose all popular front concepts at all levels. For us, the call for the united front is inseparably bound up with the demand on the reformists to break with the bourgeoisie. "Class against class!" — this slogan must be at the centre of propaganda and agitation today, and it will not be without effect.

\*1. Macedo de Sousa finally did not stand. Vieira da Silva was withdrawn by the LCI and the PRT after they discovered that her prison sentences under the Caetano regime had been for petty crime, not, as she claimed, for political activity.

\*2. Carvalho eventually did stand.

\*3. Eanes won a clear majority on the first round and there was therefore no second round of the presidential election.

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*Letter from the I-CL to the Spartacusbund, 21 July 1976.*

IN SPARTACUS 28 [June 1976], you write: "In Portugal today we call for a CP-SP workers' government, which must express the independence of the workers' movement from the bourgeoisie and base itself on the mobilisation of the working class in the struggle for its class interests".

We consider this demand for a *workers' government* to be wrong in the present situation in Portugal. We agree that revolutionaries "must develop a tactic with the aim of creating the United Front of the working class against reaction and against capitalist

exploitation"; and that revolutionaries must call on the CP and SP to "break with the bourgeoisie"; and that the comrades of the LCI and PRT failed to concretise their slogan "for a government independent of the bourgeoisie without capitalists and generals" — but you then go on to describe a CP-SP government as a workers' government.

The slogan of a workers' government arose in relation to the question of the united front, in which the revolutionaries played a central role. The idea was that "The most elementary tasks of a workers' government must consist in arming the proletariat, in disarming the bourgeois counter-revolutionary organisations, in introducing control of production, in putting the chief burden of taxation on the shoulders of the rich, and in breaking down the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie" (Resolution on Tactics of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern).

Such a demand can only be valid in a period of mass mobilisation, in a situation of acute instability of the bourgeois state, and crisis and ferment in the labour movement. In such a situation it is not necessarily true that the working class will stand united behind a revolutionary party which could lead the struggle for power. The demand for a workers' government is a bold tactical compromise which revolutionaries can use in *struggle*, a call on the reformist and centrist parties which command the mass allegiance of the working class to take power and act against the bourgeoisie; it is not our aim, nor is it an essential, strategical part of our programme.

Revolutionaries would rigorously expose a workers' government when it faltered in the struggle against reaction, and fight for it to be replaced by a revolutionary government. A workers' government is, by its very nature, unstable and provisional. The demand presupposes that the labour movement is in a state of flux, and that the non-revolutionaries can only maintain their position by putting themselves at the head of this mass mobilisation.

In other conditions, the demand for a workers' government is a reformist one, because it emasculates the revolutionary programme by implying that it can be carried out by stable bureaucratic forces within capitalism.

It is clear that the latter are the conditions in Portugal today. The working class, although 25th November was not a crushing defeat, has suffered a setback and is weaker than it was last year. The workers' commissions are still strong, but beyond the level of a few individual factories, they can no longer be said to represent organs of dual power, the embryos of which were developing before 25th November. The CP and SP are more or less stable; you describe yourselves how the SP is preparing for a coalition

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Revolutionaries can vote for Pato together with large sections of workers, and thus for CP-SP unity. They will only do this on the basis of their programme which formulates the fundamental interests of the class, and as a consequence of this programme they will uncompromisingly oppose all popular front concepts at all levels. For us, the call for the united front is inseparably bound up with the demand on the reformists to break with the bourgeoisie. "Class against class!" — this slogan must be at the centre of propaganda and agitation today, and it will not be without effect.

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with the right wing. At the present time the bourgeoisie is relatively strong and united, with a clear idea of what it needs to do.

In this situation, revolutionaries certainly argue for maximum class unity in the defence of living standards, and, as a derivative of that united-front agitation, call for a SP-CP government (while putting specific demands on such a government corresponding to the immediate needs of the working class) and call on such a government to break with the bourgeoisie: but you surely do not believe that such a government will seize state power for the working class. To call such a CP-SP government a workers' government certainly implies this, and can only create reformist illusions.

HEINZ GUNTHER, for the I-CL.

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*The I-CL is currently involved in a process of discussion round the drafting of a Manifesto. We reproduce here a draft section of the Manifesto on the question of the Workers' Government. This draft was submitted by Sean Matgamna and Chris Reynolds.*

THE ENTIRE LOGIC of the slogans, the demands, and the methods of struggle we advocate is to go beyond any stable form of capitalist rule, to disrupt and destructure the capitalist state. At the peak of working-class mobilisation, the demands of an Action Programme can link and escalate in a chain reaction, building up to a direct revolutionary struggle in which the question of state power is objectively posed.

What form of government would correspond with such a situation of limbo in society, of dual power, of struggle to decide definitively who rules, proletariat or bourgeoisie? What slogan summarises, in relation to the government of society, these demands?

The International-Communist League fights for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yes, but that is a formula that defines the political regime of the victorious proletariat in more-or-less secure possession of state power. Such a regime is virtually inconceivable, unless a revolutionary communist party already leads a majority of the working class — certainly inconceivable as a stable, consolidated regime, rather than a Paris Commune-type experience.

Such a party does not exist: it must be created. Yet deep social and political crises of the bourgeois order, and revolutionary working class mobilisations, can well erupt before there is a revolutionary party in a position to lead the majority of the working class to the seizure of power.

In Britain, with its resilient and deep-rooted established labour movement, it is doubly probable that the working class will enter

the struggle for power, not neatly united behind a Marxist party, but, on the contrary, dragging along with it all manner of reformist and bureaucratic elements.

Do we refrain from putting forward a government slogan until we can form the government? But the *logic* of the whole chain of demands leads inexorably to the question of the form of government that will tolerate, carry out, or endorse the various demands. We need an 'algebraic' government formula.

In the event of a deep crisis, shaking both the bourgeois state and the established labour movement, revolutionaries will not retreat into sectarian pedantry, advising workers to hold back until they recognise revolutionary leadership. Nor will they *simply* propose the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' — thus evading the problem of the immediate next steps in struggle.

Revolutionaries will fight for a "*Workers' Government*".

The various slogans of the programme are either vapid propaganda or else tools in the hands of revolutionaries struggling for leadership of the working class. That is true whether the revolutionaries be a tiny minority or a *big* minority in the working class. The government formula corresponding to the *mobilising* transitional slogans of our programme is: "For a workers' government".

The Bolshevik Party in 1917 first used such a formula. To the parties that claimed to represent the workers and peasants — the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries — it said: Take the power. Act against the capitalist and landlords. We will support you against reaction, accept your legality, refrain from resorting to violence against you. We simply insist on, and will *defend* as necessary, our complete freedom of political propaganda and agitation.

In 1938 Trotsky summarised it thus:

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

In Britain a "workers' government" could have meaning as a government based on a congress of workers' councils — probably with a Labourist majority. Or with the Labour Party or the TUC in a state of convulsion, having shed right-wing segments, revolutionaries might call on either of those organs of the labour movement to take power, act against the capitalist state, arm the

workers, ensure workers' control in the factories, and take immediate economic measures in the workers' interest.

The call for a workers' government is a bold tactical compromise which revolutionaries may *use in struggle*. We do not write that compromise into our programme, as a necessary aim.

Already at the 4th Congress of the Communist International, Zinoviev warned: "Woe to us if we ever allow the suggestion to creep up in our propaganda that the workers' government is a necessary step, to be achieved peacefully as a period of semi-organic construction which may take the place of civil war, etc. If such views exist among us, we must combat them resolutely".

A non-communist workers' government would be an unstable, temporary regime. Retaining complete political independence, communists would ruthlessly expose every faltering by the government in the struggle against reaction. They would fight to make sure that when that government fell — as surely it would within a short time — it was replaced by a revolutionary government, rather than by counter-revolution.

Since world war 2, especially, there has been a considerable experience of parties based on the working class forming stable bourgeois governments. That experience makes it doubly necessary to underline the point: the call for a Workers' Government has meaning only as a weapon in the hands of a party equipped with a complete transitional programme, and as a concrete step in that programme.

As an immediate *slogan* it can avoid lapsing into reformist meaning only when the bourgeois state has reached a high level of destabilisation, as a result of accompanied by mass working class mobilisation. The slogan can serve the working class only if it is an element in an advanced stage of the struggle to build and gain hegemony within the labour movement for a revolutionary communist party. The use of the slogan is linked inseparably — through the struggle to build the revolutionary party in the working class — to a programme that sets its goal as the creation and consolidation of a working class, soviet, state. To propose such a 'transitional' workers' government as a *substitute* for a communist workers' government, or for the dictatorship of the proletariat, is merely to give comfort to reformism.

Those who use the "workers' government" as a substitute for the fight for independent revolutionary working-class mobilisation "take their place beside the Social Democrats as a new type of trickster" (Radek). Such are the Lambert sect in France, who speak of a CP-SP government in France, or a 'pure' social democratic government in Germany, as a workers' government — irrespective of its relation to the bourgeois state, and ignoring

entirely the question of programme, even as an abstract blueprint, let alone as a weapon of working class mobilisation.

And in Britain today? We have a Labour government that is a *capitalist* government, and an effective *capitalist* government because it is based on and has a lot of confidence from the labour movement. Most of the demands we make on it say implicitly: break with the bourgeoisie!

We say it explicitly: break with the bourgeoisie, carry out actions in the interests of the working class.

We ourselves agitate to mobilise workers to fight to *impose* pro-working class actions on the government or to force concessions. In the course of that fight we build our own party. To the degree that we mobilise, the bourgeois state can be shaken up and destabilised, and the labour movement too is shaken, transformed, regenerated, the balance of political forces within it is changed.

For the International-Communist League, the call for a workers' government is the culmination of the various demands we direct at the established labour movement, fighting for a break with the bourgeoisie. Its appropriateness or otherwise as an *immediate demand*, in its *summary* form, depends on working class mobilisation, stability or otherwise of the state, political condition of the labour movement, etc.

To call on the Labour Government now to declare itself a "Workers' Government", as opposed to making concrete demands on it (including 'break with the bourgeoisie on this or that concrete question') would be pernicious. It would be abstract, propagandist, apt to sow illusions rather than dispel them in action for concrete demands which are a logical next step in struggle. the call for a workers' government is a weapon for revolutionary mobilisation — but only where there is already a tremendous degree of mobilisation demanding an immediate political focus. It is the final part of the 'Action Programme' section of our Manifesto because the Action Programme must cover the whole range of important possibilities and contingencies that will face our class over the period between now and the proletarian revolution.

# Discussion on the Programme

AT ITS CONFERENCE in September 1976, the I-CL decided to open a six-month discussion period on the question of drafting a programmatic document. We print here two contributions from Sean Matgamna on the question of the character such a programmatic document should have.

We will publish further documents from the discussion in later issues of International Communist, thus helping to inform and involve our readers in the I-CL's discussions.

# THE NATURE OF OUR ACTION PROGRAMME

'The Nature of our Action Programme' is a section of a draft Manifesto now being discussed in the I-CL.

A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME OF ACTION is neither an optional nor an arbitrarily chosen weapon for a party with the politics and the goals of the I-CL. Its nature sums up the essential content of our politics — proletarian *self*-liberation.

It expresses the most advanced lessons of the attempts by the proletariat between 1848 and 1919 to hammer out a political practice which linked the goal of socialist revolution with the day to day organic struggle imposed on the working class by capitalism.

## Social Democracy: Minimum and Maximum Programmes

In the epoch of social democracy, before the great international labour movement collapsed into national fragments at the feet of the warring bourgeoisies in 1914, socialists operated with a minimum programme and a maximum programme.

The maximum programme was the millennium, the unseen goal in the far distance, the subject of abstract propaganda, holiday speeches and moral uplift; the theoretical property of an elite within the loose parties of social democracy. The minimum programme consisted of limited practical goals and the immediate aims of the everyday struggle of the working class.

What was the link between the two? The party and the Trade Unions, being built in the struggles and through propaganda. (A sect like IS today provides a miniscule historical fossil for students of the tragedy of the Second International and its methods).

Capitalism was advancing organically; so was the labour movement. The 'right' Social Democrats saw the process continuing indefinitely until capitalism became transformed by its own evolution, of which the evolution of the labour movement was part — "The movement is everything, the goal nothing", said their theoretician Eduard Bernstein. The mainstream Left believed evolution involved qualitative breaks and leaps, and that the evolutionary process would have to culminate in a revolutionary proletarian seizure of power.

Both failed to link the daily class struggle with the goal of socialism. For the right, accommodating to capitalism and moulding what it could of the labour movement accordingly, this separation made sense, and their rigorous thinkers attempted to make *theoretical* sense of it. For the Left, the separation led to sterile 'maximalism' and hollow 'orthodoxy' (Kautsky).

In practice, control and hegemony was left in the hands of those whose practice corresponded accurately to the minimum/maximum model; in turn, this overweening reality of the labour movement led the 'orthodox' Left to accommodate to the Right. Ultimately, having won one hollow verbal victory after another in debate, they capitulated to the Right in practice.

Central to both wings of mainstream Social Democracy, for differing reasons but with the same consequences, was the same failure. They failed to see in the creative self-controlling activity of the working class — including workers who were initially, at the beginning of struggle in which they could learn, formally backward politically — the central force for socialism.

Left and Right had in common a bureaucratic, elitist conception of socialism. Their operational image of the relationship of the revolutionary party to the revolutionary class was one of pedagogic teacher to passive pupil, or self-substituting bureaucratic instrument to inert mass.

## The Revolutionary Marxists in the Second International

Rosa Luxemburg, first, in company with the orthodox 'left',

exposed the relapse to utopian socialism implicit in Bernsteinian 'revisionism' and also the relapse to the substance of utopia-building within capitalism involved in reformist practice.

She then, by 1910, came to understand the empty futility of the political victories of the 'orthodox' and the practical impotence of those, like Kautsky, who accommodated to the dominant forces in the Second International. She learned from the tremendous self-mobilisations of, especially, the working class in the Tsarist empire during the 1905-7 Revolution, and came to see the reality of European Social Democracy clearly.

The Russian Bolsheviks did not see the nature of the European 'Left' until it capitulated to the openly chauvinist Right in 1914 — but they did, right through, relate to the central truth of Marxist socialism which the tremendous combativity and creativity of the Russian working class kept before their eyes.

They had the advantage over Luxemburg and her small circle in Germany of not over-reacting to a bureaucratised, routinised, essentially elitist party, which they could only see a future for by looking to the explosive latent creative power of the working class to correct it 'when the time came'. The Bolsheviks built a revolutionary party which was uniquely sensitive to the creativity of the working class, in tune with the central and irreplaceable chord of Marxist socialism; which learned from the working class, absorbed the lessons of its struggles, synthesised them with the experiences of the international struggle, and codified them scientifically — thus educating a stable cadre.

### **Transitional demands and the Comintern**

The communist movement, reorganising itself during and immediately after world war 1, resolved to have done with the minimum/maximum division, with its inescapable consignment of the masses to passivity vis-a-vis the struggle for socialism, which the leaders would talk of and History would take care of.

The central threat of their revolutionary conceptions was summed up in the idea of *Soviets* (workers' councils) — at the same time the broadest, most responsive, most democratic and most effective means for the immediate struggle against capitalism, and the essential organs of the revolutionary proletarian regime. (Significantly, the first notion of a transitional programme is expressed in Trotsky's analysis of the 1905 Russian Revolution — the revolution that first produced Soviets).

Resolved to *mobilise the working class* to fight immediately for socialism, the communist movement elaborated the conception of a transitional programme — to link the everyday struggles of

the working class with the goal of socialist revolution; to focus every struggle so as to rouse working class masses and direct those masses against the pillars of capitalist society.

Luxemburg, at the foundation of the Communist Party of Germany in 1919 (shortly before her assassination) and the Communist International at the 3rd and 4th Congresses began to elaborate such a concept.

The Communist Parties attempted to root themselves in the immediate working class struggles and relate those struggles to an overall struggle for socialism. They began to bring 'socialist' propaganda down from the cloudy skies and harness it to the hard daily grind of working class struggle.

The full socialist programme was broken down into a linked chain, each link of which might successively be grasped, and the movement hauled forward, dependent on the degree of mobilisation, intensity of struggles, and the relationship of forces.

Everyday demands, as on wages, were expressed not within the framework of acceptance of a capitalism that the socialists believed to be maturing towards some optimum time for ripeness, when it would fall. They were expressed *against* capitalism, so as to challenge capitalist prerogatives and the assumptions of capitalist society on a day-to-day basis.

This transitional programme, in the hands of a party organised for immediate war on capitalism and neglecting at the same time neither general propaganda nor the most 'minimalist' concerns; that was the weapon that the communists armed themselves with (though the Comintern never actually *formalised* a transitional programme).

It summed up the pillars of the bitter post-1914 knowledge on which Marxist socialism reconstructed itself — War on capitalism, not coexistence with capitalism waiting to inherit its legacy either peacefully or with a little bit of last-minute force. Mobilisation and involvement of the broadest layers of the working class in immediate conflict with capitalism, a break with elitism, propagandism, and evolutionism. The integration of the various fronts of the class struggle, ideological, political, economic, into one strategic drive.

### **The Transitional Programme for the Comintern and for us**

The conception of a transitional programme and transitional demands was the product of the great Marxist renaissance and lessons drawn from the terrible collapse in 1914.

Certainly it was part of a world view that saw the struggle for socialism as immediate. But the conception itself, the criticism of the theory and practice of the Second International out of which it came, was a major conquest in understanding the relationship of

the daily struggles of the working class to the struggle for socialism, even if the possibility of struggle for socialism were not quite immediate. The Communist International seriously began to discuss transitional demands at about the same time as it accepted that capitalism had survived the post-world war 1 earthquake and reached temporary stabilisation.

Above all the conception of a transitional programme represented a break with the elitist, bureaucratic, evolutionary socialism to which its central core, mass mobilisation in class struggle, is the very antithesis.

Nominal adherence to the method of transitional demands of the Communist International or of the 'Transitional Programme' written by Trotsky in 1938 is no *guarantee* against Second-Internationalist conceptions. There are no such guarantees. Within nominal adherence, there has been a general reversion in the Trotskyist movement to the level of the Second International. One can even find 'Trotskyists' for whom transitional demands are clever devices to manipulate the working class, to con them into socialism; others for whom they are only lists of measures to demand of this or that government; others, again, for whom they are merely propaganda formulas for the literary 'exposure' of the reformists; some, indeed, for whom they are semi-religious talismans.

But in history the idea of transitional demands summed up the break with the evolutionary, bureaucratic, elitist conception of socialism. That is what it means for the International-Communist League.

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# WHAT IS AN ACTION PROGRAMME?

'What is an Action Programme' is a commentary on a draft Manifesto now being discussed by the I-CL. It is reproduced from the I-CL Internal Bulletin.

WHAT IS AN 'ACTION PROGRAMME'? If you attempt to work up a document of *answers, slogans, action projects*, either you are

guided by 'inspiration', pet ideas, or some other arbitrary and subjective approach; or you attempt rigorously to draw practical conclusions from a Marxist analysis of reality and general codifications summing up the experience of the working class so far, focused on the situation facing the British working class.

Your Action Programme will be preceded and accompanied by general propaganda and *in depth* expositions of the various parts of the Action Programme — otherwise the cadres of the organisation themselves will not understand, or not adequately understand, the Action Programme or some of its sections.

When the 1938 Transitional Programme was produced, a whole background of socialist culture, inside the FI ranks and even to a degree on its periphery, could be assumed. The massive debate and the hammering out of such slogans as on the workers' government by the early Communist International was still living and recent memory (at most 15 to 17 years back) for many of the cadre. Many of the early documents were in their possession or easily available. For example, in the 'Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International', Trotsky's exposition of the workers' government slogan feels no more need of *additional* warnings of the dangers discussed by the CI than to add a summary of the mis-use of the slogan by the Stalinists.

Today, massive lacunae exist in Marxist analysis of society, amounting to a major crisis of Marxism. The weakness of our draft Manifesto in explanation of the condition of capitalism is one illustration of this. Moreover, the general cultural level of the revolutionary movement has been thrown backward massively, to such an extent that perhaps most of the current 'Trotskyist' groups could learn valuable positive lessons from the Left in the Second International!

Many of the basic concepts used in drafting the Action Programmes of the '30s have lost most of their meaning, or never had any, for the present-day Left. Some of them ('Workers' Control', 'Nationalisation', 'Workers' Government') have been given a reformist/utopian character in their current usage. The very conception of socialism itself needs to be restated — for it has simply been perverted into a repulsive elitist 'statism' by the dominant sections of the British left.

Many, or most, of the demands essential to an Action Programme have been made into fetish-objects, outside of and above rational judgment and critical and concrete assessment by the 'orthodox' Trotskyist sects, because they are part of the 'Transitional Programme'. And even the more flexible USFI 'Trotskyists' who *don't* parade the Transitional Programme in ritual procession as Catholics parade statues of Jesus on the feast

of Corpus Christi, keep it as an ancestral heirloom in a place of reverence, not quite sure what to do with it, but given to taking chunks of *its verbiage* to buttress some political monstrosity, whether it be the IMG's recent mis-use of the idea of the Socialist United States of Europe to gain their entry into the ranks of working class chauvinism on the Common Market, or their earlier mis-use of the slogan of workers' control. (The politics of the IWC today are a still recognisable version of the central slogan of the European FI sections' work in the Social Democracy in the early to mid '60s). They are like barbarians who appropriate stones from a once imposing building whose structure has been shattered, to construct hovels for themselves.

And, after the fetishists and their political first cousins, the vandals who believe their hovels are holy because stones from the 'Transitional Programme' cathedral are visibly part of them, come — naturally — the *negative* fetishists, IS. For them too the Transitional Programme and the method of the Transitional Programme are outside of rational consideration. Irrational *rejection* is their attitude, with fear as superstitious as the reverence of the WRP. They *reject* in all conditions slogans like the Sliding Scale of Wages, and are entirely confined to the minimum/maximum conception of a programme.

The proof of the negative-fetish character of IS's attitude to the Transitional Programme is that in all their writings and comments, despite all their pretence of cool rationality, they have never rationally assessed the origins, significance, elements, and remaining validity of the 1938 draft. All we have is the true assertion that the demands and slogans in the Transitional Programme were presented in the 1938 *document* in a setting of brief analysis and all-pervading recognition of chronic capitalist crisis — and, taking off from that, Tony Cliff allowed himself (at the Skegness rally, 1971) to regale an audience, half of which had never heard of the Transitional Programme, with the idea that if you take it seriously you wind up like Posadas, believing in flying saucers.

For all these reasons, explanations, re-statement (as on state capitalism vs socialism) and detailed expositions with reference to the history of the slogan (as on the workers' government) are essential.

"The significance of the programme is the significance of the party", said Trotsky, discussing the Transitional Programme of 1938. For the I-CL this type of manifesto signifies an attempt to *start* a process of educating and developing the organisation's cadres in the politics of the Transitional Programme. The Action Programme element, the slogans and responses, are tools in the hands of the cadres — it is vital that the cadres understand the

use, the limits, and relation to the other tools, of each demand. For we do not present or serve up even a much more simple 'Action Programme' *in toto*: the *organisation* uses its judgment to decide how to swivel the various elements in the programme so as best to use them in any concrete situation.

Given that framework, there is no reason why we cannot valuably produce a simplified short pamphlet for wider circulation, called 'Action Programme', summarising some elements from the Manifesto and backed up by the Manifesto and other material.

But just to present an "Action Programme, with minimal explanation, would be a bare collection of slogans drawn together mainly from the Transitional Programme. It would be a literary exercise in collation, of not much value.

Alfred Rosmer, in *Lenin's Moscow*, reports the comment a communist militant made when Lenin's pamphlet *Left Wing Communism* appeared around the time of the Second World Congress of the CI in 1920. He said, "It is a dangerous book", meaning that people would take from it *only* recipes and licence for artful dodges and 'flexibility' of a type altogether different from that which Lenin was trying to teach the ultra-lefts. He was right, of course.

The Transitional Programme of Leon Trotsky is also a 'dangerous book' in the epoch when almost the whole political culture of which it was a sort of distillation or 'abstract', designed for a specific purpose, has disappeared. The specific character of the Transitional Programme and even more of the Action Programme for France — lean, honed-down, unintentionally creating an illusion of literary-scientific self-sufficiency, though Trotsky disclaimed anything like that — bears witness to the fact that Trotsky was preparing levers to insert into the labour movement, where a lot could be taken as common ground and the task of the Trotskyist cadres was one of re-orienting the existing movement for action.

It also relates to an immediate situation where the labour movement 'switches points' and fights back — or is crushed in the relatively short term. We can operate with no such assumptions. The cadres of so-called 'Trotskyism' have largely forgotten or are ignorant of much that the 1938 Trotskyists could take for granted in the mass labour movement they related to in the 1930s (or, at least, did take largely for granted, on pain of otherwise renouncing all hope of re-orienting the movement in time for the coming show-down). Moreover, we operate in a situation of simmering, rather than crushing, crisis.

The Transitional Programme's slogans have too often been abused, misunderstood, applied in opposition to the spirit of the method of the Transitional Programme — by the French OCI

(Lambert sect) for example, with their 'workers' government' without reference to the state, class mobilisation, or programme in any sense of the word. The same in Ireland where former associates of Workers' Fight apply what they understand as the Transitional Programme approach to the 26-County Labour Party — and effectively if unintentionally support the coalition government!

In the Middle Ages physicians worked from anatomical textbooks by Galen which they inherited from the ancient world. In a period when it was deemed degrading for such people to do manual work, the doctor would sit in the operating room on a high stool, with Galen's book open, giving directions to minions and apprentices who actually carried out the operations. Eventually the textbook was discovered to deal not with the anatomy of men and women, but of monkeys! If our former comrades in the 'League for a Workers' Republic' were to go and study the discussion and documents that produced the slogan and demands in the slim pamphlet they fetishise, they would have to understand that they bear the same sort of relation to Trotsky and the early Comintern and Fourth International as the medieval physicians did to Galen.

How do we use a Manifesto or Action Programme? One of the central theoretical insights of the old Workers' Fight groups from its study of the history and problems of the Fourth International was on what a programme is and is not. It is not a blueprint, a fixed document, nor even codifications from experience distilled into directives for action. It is all of these things, but more — a living, fluid inter-relation of these with conjunctural analyses and, above all, concrete assessments and responses on the part of the revolutionary organisation. It is a living thing, not a document. It can only live and develop in and through the practice of the revolutionary party — "The significance of the programme is the significance of the party".

Its revolutionary validity or otherwise is determined not only by whether its theoretical bedrock and basic analysis is sound, but by the other more immediate, more conjunctural factors — that is, all that is specific to the reactions, concrete analysis, and practice of the party. This is where revolutionary Marxism divides from even the best and most useful academic blueprint-making.

Not to understand this is to be open to serious errors — the error of seeing 'a document' as 'the programme' in itself (the beginning of the process of fetishisation); the error of believing a programme can have revolutionary life apart from the revolutionary party and the working class. (It can have a sort of life, the basic codifications that is, but more like suspended animation, with the risk of 'Galenisation' if too long divorced from the practice of a revolutionary organisation or if allowed to flake off from the revivifying struggle

for its development as the party develops).

It can lead to the sort of errors Workers' Fight made on the USFI (though our relationship to the USFI consists of a great deal more positive than errors), of appearing to agree with most of the basic codifications, which we saw as the programme, and being perplexed by the vast range of political, practical, and tactical differences that somehow existed and separated us from the USFI. We didn't understand that these too are 'the programme' — the living part, and, for immediate purposes, the most decisive part.

An I-CL Manifesto will be of us to the degree that the I-CL is of use in reacting to and anticipating events — and also in responding creatively to new situations and gaps in the document, of which they were are bound to be some that we will not detect. Central here is a Marxist detachment and critical spirit. Even if every member of the I-CL agrees with every phrase in the final draft — then especially there can be no fetishisation, no Bordigist complacency about our own products. In 1930 Trotsky acidly replied to the Bordigists who claimed they had 'not departed from' their programme of 1925, which in 1925 Trotsky had approved, by pointing out that the purpose of a programme is not 'not to be departed from', but to be used and developed and supplemented as new situations arise. The same comment would do for the present-day 'Trotskyists' who claim 'not to depart from the Transitional Programme.

# REVIEWS

## CHALLENGE OF... STALINISM

**"The Challenge of the Left Opposition [1923-25]". L:D. Trotsky. [Pathfinder Press].**

This wonderful collection of documents is, unfortunately, misleadingly titled and labelled so that the whole perspective of events is turned back to front.

In 1923-5 the Left Opposition was "challenging" — what? It was fighting, yes, but a desperate rearguard battle against a surprise attack by forces that had yet to clearly define themselves. The new bureaucracy which appeared, tremendously strong, like some demon force from the netherworld, was already consolidating its political power in those years. In the 1923-5 Left Opposition revolutionary internationalist communism was already fighting with its back to the wall against a rising Russian nationalist domination of the Communist International, and the rule of the privileged bureaucracy within Russia whose interests that nationalism served.

The 'Lenin Levy' of 1924 — misnamed to gallows-humour proportions — allowed tens of thousands, mainly careerists, into the party, to dilute it and render it entirely malleable in the hands of the apparatus and of Stalin. After that, the party was — so we can see clearly in retrospect — an instrument of that bureaucracy, unreclaimable.

Already by 1925 there was evidence of the use of *anti-semitism* against the genuine communists of the Left Opposition, *even within the party!* The mechanics of the Stalinist political counter-revolution, with those in control of the party and state apparatus leading it as a cold coup d'état and claiming that in reality there was complete revolutionary continuity, obscured and confused what was happening, who was playing what role. But for five decades the communism of Lenin and Trotsky has been fighting a rearguard action.

The offensive had come from the anti-communist Stalinist forces — and by 1924 the Stalinist usurpation had successfully consolidated every point of strength that allowed it to drive the internationalist communists out of the party entirely in 1927.

Only events outside Russia, successful new revolutions, in China or in Britain or in Germany, could, after 1924, have changed the balance inside the Soviet Union — that, or a successful uprising by a revolutionary party of the opposition. It is as easy to see that now as it was probably *impossible* for those, like Trotsky, caught up in the rapidly unfolding events, to see it in the mid '20s. But if we don't see it and say so, then we mistake where we have come from and where we now are.

Whatever carping one indulges in against the reflection of the politics of the SWP in the packaging, those basing themselves on the Lenin/Trotsky tradition are deeply in debt to the publishing house of the SWP. The most important document here is "The Lessons of October"; there is also a document, never before published, discussing the furure produced by "Lessons of October".

It is significant that the first comprehensive exposition of the Leninist theory of the party — for "Lessons of October" is that — was written by the leader of the genuine communists who had *already* lost control of the party. Trotsky (in 1924, as a long preface to a collection of his articles) set out all the premises and summed up the entire experience of Lenin's practice in building the Bolshevik Party, the prototype 'party of a new type', in all its phases — and focused the centrality of this question for revolutionaries by contrasting Leninist practice with the errors of both the fledgling German CP in 1923 and of the Right Bolsheviks in 1917.

Lenin never produced such a codification, and would no doubt have said on this question what he said when cutting short "State and Revolution" in August 1917 — "It is more pleasant and useful to go through the 'experience of the revolution' than to write about it". By 1924 repeated defeats in the West made it plain that it was necessary to write this exposition so as to equip the Communist Parties to 'go through the experience of the revolution' successfully. And already endemic in party life were references to episodic writings of Lenin from various phases of Bolshevik history, often used arbitrarily to sanction some tactical or organisational zig-zag; scholasticism; and text-chopping with Lenin's writings as holy writ. At the party congress in 1926 J V Stalin

"proved" that Socialism in One Country was possible by quoting a line or two that Lenin had written in 1915!

Trotsky's work, unfortunately, was to be the occasion, not for a re-armament of the Communist Parties — a genuine 'Bolshevisation' — but for a new avalanche of slanders. Nevertheless, it is the best available mature exposition of the Leninist theory of the party, drawing on the full experience of Lenin. If less profound than Gramsci's later "Modern Prince", it is much more accessible.

Until 1924 the nearest thing to a 'mature' post-1917 summary on the party was the resolution of the Second World Congress of the CI. That resolution, written by Zinoviev, is ephemeral and shallow, a product of the period when quick victories were still expected in the West. It expounds the need for Communist Parties in *technical*, almost military terms, to prepare proletarian uprisings.

Those tendencies which in Britain today see 'the party' as primarily a technical instrument, rather than first and foremost an ideological vanguard — IS, IMG, WRP — are in fact in Zinoviev's tradition, not Trotsky's. Look at what survives of the IS old guard, round Cliff. These arrogant petty-bourgeois smart-aleces, who never had respect for the traditions of our movement, have zig-zagged from a caricature "Luxemburgist" conception of the party (see any of Cliff's writings on the subject up to 1968) to an all-too-real Zinovievist conception. And the Workers' League, that wheezing sigh of nostalgia for IS's past, whose leaders helped carry out the transformation and then recoiled in horror — why, it is no more than a tired relapse to pre-1968 IS!

★ ★ ★

Pathfinder intend to follow this volume with a collection of documents of the joint Trotsky/Zinoviev Opposition. J.C.

## UNPOPULAR, UNDEMOCRATIC....

### "A History of the People's Democracies". François Fejto. [Pelican, 95p].

The Hungarian Revolution which Russian troops and tanks drowned in blood 20 years ago was both a working class revolt against Stalinist bureaucratic suppression and a revolt against domination and control of the Hungarian nation by the Russian state. That combination gave it an especially explosive character. The regime of bureaucratic terror under which the Hungarian people had lived since the mid-1940s was administered by Hungarians like Rakosi and Gero, and did serve a native bureaucracy that developed a privileged position in society. But they were, then, strictly gauleiters for the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy, put in power after the conquest of Hungary (an ally of Hitler in world war 2) by the Russian national army in 1944.

The social transformation and the overthrow of capitalism was the work of the Russian army, manipulating local forces, throughout Stalinist East Europe, with the exception of Yugoslavia and Albania, where native forces made the revolution. In Czechoslovakia, the Russian army was not actually in occupation when the CP coup occurred in February 1948, but the consequences of its previous occupation made it possible. The government structure, in which the CP had the decisive state levers of power in its hands, made possible that coup, in which armed bands of CP workers played the decisive role. (Even before the war the Czech CP had been a mass party).

The 'democratic' imperialist powers and the Stalinist bureaucracy had, during the war, agreed on post-war spheres of influence, in cynical disregard of the interests and desires of the peoples involved. Until the Stalin/Tito break in early 1948, all East Europe was undisputedly a conglomerate of states openly dominated and economically plundered by the Russian state. Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, East Germany — these, by agreement, were Stalin's.

Churchill and Stalin agreed on a 50/50

share of influence in Yugoslavia. Royalist forces, which throughout the war collaborated with the Germans against the Titoist partisans, were given more aid by the Russians than were the Titoists. But the decisive victory of the CP-led partisans, over both Germans and native Royalist forces, and the insistence of the Yugoslav CP on forming a government of its own, one confident in the knowledge of its own victory, rendered the agreement over Yugoslavia inoperative, though after the Tito/Stalin break it may have been an inhibiting factor in stopping a Russian invasion of Yugoslavia.

For his part, Stalin kept very much to the agreement — to the extent of refusing aid to, sabotaging, and disrupting the CP-led side in the Greek Civil War, from 1944 onwards, thus condemning the Greek people to further decades of capitalist tyranny.

Stalin also kept his part of the deal in the West. Where, as in Italy and France, the bourgeoisie were discredited and virtually helpless, and the working class, under CP leadership, armed and effectively in control, the CPs aided the bourgeoisie to re-establish their control, disarm the working class resistance fighters, and rebuild their state machine.

In the heady atmosphere of East-West friendship the whole of Europe was to experience a new flowering of a beautiful new democracy, a classless democracy.

The capitalists had long used the myth that the state is neutral and democracy is classless. Marxists had argued that working class democracy is real mass self-rule; bourgeois democracy is domination by a minority.

The Stalinist parties, while giving practical aid to re-establishing bourgeois democracy in France (including accepting responsibility for France's colonial war in Vietnam and for a horrific imperialist massacre in 'French' Algeria) and Italy, also developed *their* version of the old bourgeois myth of the neutral state. It was no longer *either* bourgeois rule *or* working class power. There was to be, throughout Europe, East and West, a new democracy, "People's Democracy".

From France and Italy (where, until 1947, the CPs were in the government) to Poland and Czechoslovakia, the marvellous new classless People's Democracy was said to exist. It was the double-talk formula for

the capitalist/Stalinist coexistence.

The reality was laid bare as tensions grew to cold war pitch. In the West the CPs were booted out of government posts, and the bourgeois control of the state power showed that the formula 'People's Democracy', like the classic formulae of bourgeois democracy in the past, masked bourgeois social and political control.

In the East, where the Russian Army was in control and the CP ministries in the coalition governments were the decisive ones giving them state control, East/West division led to the elimination of the remnants of the capitalist class, politically and economically. In any case the economic collapse caused by war had led to massive state take-overs of the economy long before. In 1945, 75% of the industry of highly advanced Czechoslovakia was nationalised. Quickly, the East European states were re-modelled as duplicates of the Russian Stalinist model.

This was how the "People's Democracies" François Fejto writes of were born, the part he doesn't deal with. Fejto, a Hungarian 'socialist' who emigrated at the end of the '40s, begins with an introductory chapter entitled "Stalinism at its apogee and in decline". From the death of Stalin onwards he provides a detailed and valuable account of the states of Stalinist East Europe. His chapter on 1956 brings out clearly the differences between Poland and Hungary and their interaction. He deals with the effects of the Sino-Soviet split, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1970, and the development of 'market socialism'.

It is a competent and accessible chronicle and survey of facts. The analysis is fuzzy and sometimes silly, as when, describing the East Berlin uprisings of 1953, he says mildly, "Repression followed: 42 people were executed and there were 25,000 arrests. This recalled the Kronstadt rebellion of February 1921. Once again the dictatorship of the proletariat was suppressing a proletarian movement" (p.37).

Nevertheless, a valuable assemblage of facts and events over the last quarter-century from an area of the world about which socialists are usually 'for' or 'against', but in either case only too often simply ignorant.

S.M.

## THE IRON HEEL

"The Iron Heel". Jack London. [1976 edition by the Journeyman Press: 75p paper, £2.50 hard-back].

Not to have read this book is to be a socialist illiterate. Now that it is in print again there is no excuse.

Jack London's novel is one of the greatest and most powerful pieces of socialist literature ever written. It is also astonishing.

It is in the form of an uncompleted manuscript purportedly seven centuries old when it is published, in 'the year of socialism 419', with a short preface for readers in the 27th century. Its author, Avis Everhard, is the comrade and wife of Ernest Everhard, a working class leader in early 20th century America. The story it tells is of the eruption of bitter class warfare, of civil wars, the division of the working class along sectional lines, and the development and victory of an oligarchic dictatorship, the 'Iron Heel'.

Ernest Everhard, its rather Nietzschean hero, is executed. A "first proletarian revolt", "the Chicago Commune", is drowned in blood. The manuscript breaks off shortly before a planned 'second' revolt is due to break out.

The author of the 'preface' tells us that Avis Everhard was almost certainly soon captured and executed. (The 'mercenaries' of the Iron Heel did not keep records of their victims...). The second revolt too is doomed to defeat. So are many others which break out again and again before the final victory of the working class 300 years later.

It is a whole historic epoch of oligarchic slavery that succeeds capitalism, not socialism. The writer of the preface lets the mask slip and the thinking behind the book is clear in the following passage: "(The 300-year reign of the oligarchy was)... a step backward, to the social tyrannies that made the early world a hell, but that were as necessary as the Iron Heel was unnecessary. ... What else than feudalism could have followed upon the breakdown of that great centralised governmental machine known as the Roman Empire? No so, however, with the Iron Heel. In the orderly procedure of social evolution there was no place for it. It was not necessary and it was not inevitable. It must always remain the great curios-

ity of history — a whim, a fantasy, an apparition, a thing unexpected and undreamed; and it should serve as a warning to those rash political theorists of today who speak with certitude of social processes".

"Today" of course, was 1907, when the book was written, not a day in the supposed socialist world of the 27th century.

It is London's harsh, social-Darwinian views, emphasising struggle, conflict, and knowing the possibility of defeat for human or animal individuals or classes, that generated the imaginative energy for a pre-vision of fascism and of the totalitarian state. Ironically, a similar conception made this strange mixture of a man see a natural racial superiority in Aryan man — 'the blond beast' — thus subscribing to the racist mythology that was soon to be the ideology of the real Iron Heel in Germany.

But the pre-vision is not fatalistic. It is a warning, part of an as yet undecided struggle. It has nothing in common with the whining pessimism and abandonment of socialist aspirations typical of the writers who in the '30s decided that totalitarianism was 'the wave of the future'. In London's view the struggle goes on and on, as it must, for three centuries, *until the workers triumph*.

The "Iron Heel" differs, too, from other anti-utopias in that it is rooted firmly in reality. In "1984", in contrast, where very much of the life described is taken from contemporary capitalist society — see Orwell's collected essays — in the end the explanation is mystical gibberish about a drive for power for its own sake, divorced from the class struggle.

Contemporary class struggles find their direct reflection in London's book. It is the clarity with which the roles and possible logical consequences are worked out that is remarkable. Here London was almost certainly indebted to Daniel De Leon of the Socialist Labour Party, and to the left-wing socialist upsurge in the USA then, with the foundation of the IWW in 1905, led by De Leon, Eugene Debs, and Bill Hayward.

Just as Orwell dramatised the vapid reactionary stupidities of James Burnham (against whose books, "The Managerial Revolution", "The Machiavellians", etc., he had written some very powerful critical essays, however), London dramatised De Leon's ideas.

It is not to diminish the imaginative creativity of London to point to the intellectual structure on which it rests.

De Leon had, by the beginning of the 20th century, the clearest and most brutally accurate picture of the weakness of the world labour movement and its leaders, seeing things in advance that Lenin would not see fully until 1914. He was concerned with craft divisions, the growth of a labour aristocracy, the role of the labour bureaucracy as 'labour lieutenants of capitalism', the weakness and hollowness of the apparent strength of socialist parliamentarism, the basic unfavourable position of the working class as an aspirant revolutionary class — and with the implications of all this for the practice of socialists.

Mostly he came to schematic, sectarian-utopian 'solutions' — but then he was dead three years when the Russian Revolution answered in creative life the questions he had seen and tried to answer through reasoning.

At a time when bland optimism had made most revolutionaries forget the "Communist Manifesto"'s warning that class struggles end in either the victory of the revolutionary class or the mutual ruin of the contending classes, and dismissed the possibility of defeat, De Leon, who saw the proletarian movement in the great sweep of historical perspectives, was led to reflect on it as a real possibility.

Focusing on the linked problems of a working class aristocracy and a labour movement bureaucracy allied to capitalism, he cast his mind back to the class struggle in Rome 200 years B.C., and, in a pamphlet, "Two Pages from Roman History", drew a comparison with the defeat of the plebeian masses led by the Gracchi and their miserable subsequent fate tied to the rulers of the plundering Roman Republics and Empires.

The point is not the accuracy or otherwise of his comparisons — which are debatable, to say the least — but their power to conjure up a black but realistic vision of, and pose questions about, what might be in store for the working class.

London's free-ranging imagination transmutes De Leon's ideas qualitatively. In 1976 it is difficult to imagine what a leap was required to fuse the elements of the black vision together.

The labour movement knew repressions,

but not sustained, intense, sterilising totalitarianism. One gets an eerie feeling today from the gleeful contempt with which even Engels dismisses the effects of possible state action against the socialists. Hadn't the Socialist Party grown enormously during the dozen years of the Anti-Socialist laws in Germany? The worst catastrophe he could think of was a mass blood-letting on the Paris Commune scale, caused by the working class being provoked into premature action. And the effects of that lasted only a few years.

In 1907 socialism seemed an immense power, progressing ever onwards. But London's was the vision of the future. The tragedy is that it was not a wild phantasmagoria that the labour movement had the right to ignore, but had solid analytical underpinnings in De Leon's work, which the labour movement did ignore — suffering from world war, then defeated revolutions, leading to Stalinism — and then Fascism, then war....

J.C.

## COUNTER-REVOLUTION DEVOURS ITS CHILDREN, TOO.

"The Night of the Long Knives". Max Gallo. [Fontana paperback, £1.50].

Considering its importance in the history of the 20th century, Fascism is a strangely ill-defined, dark and mysterious thing — as occult in its nature as diabolical in its deeds. It smashed the movement for proletarian revolution in south and central Europe, and, on that basis, having galvanised the defeated imperialists of world war 1, proceeded to challenge the victors to another round — world war 2, into which it also drew the Soviet Union. But what was it?

From bourgeois science a class analysis can hardly be expected, and not expecting it we are not disappointed at the banalities about leader-worship, sadism, and the diabolical Hitler which serve as explanation on one level, or the grand abstractions about totalitarian state rule on the other, which leave us mystified on *how* and *why*, and on the differences between superficially similar states (the USSR and Nazi Germany) and on the identity between apparently polar opp-

osites (the USA or Britain and Nazi Germany).

The failure of the labour movement, and especially the ostensible Marxists of the CPs — the first victims of fascism, without whose defeat the genocide against Jews, gypsies and others could never have occurred — to provide a coherent general theory and class-anatomical description of fascism is, on first consideration, more surprising. If, after repeated defeats, the victim has not learned even to define and understand the nature of the enemy force, then the way is left open for repeated defeats. Yet on the left fascism remains a swear-word, except among the Trotskyists and those influenced by them, who have much increased in numbers during the last few years when Trotsky's writings on the question have gained a far wider circulation than ever they had when fascism was the life and death question for the European and world proletariat, when Trotsky's ideas would have become a material force arming the communist workers of Germany against fascism.

To social democracy, today faced with the growth of the National Front into the most powerful British fascist movement since the 1930s (albeit still in the gestation stage, relatively small, and in no immediate sense a threat to the existence of the British labour movement), fascism is just "extremism", "provoked" as much by left "extremism" as anything else. If ignored it will go away.

The Communist Parties have still not got an analysis of fascism.

In the period when Hitler was amassing the forces to pulverise the German labour movement, Nazism was only one of a galaxy of reactionary forces all of whom were fascists — social-fascist (i.e. social-democratic), Trotsky-fascist, etc. In fact the Hitler fascists were the best fascists, because the social-fascists, for example, were disguised. The future communist inmates of Hitler's concentration camps found it possible to collaborate with their future jailers even in breaking strikes organised by the 'social-fascists', their future confrères in the camps.

"Social Democracy and Fascism are twins", pronounced the all-wise J V Stalin, dimly grasping the broad historical truth that both fascism and social democracy, in their time, protect the bourgeoisie from the proletariat. He totally failed to understand

that the season of resort to fascism by the bourgeoisie was the point when time had run out for the old lackey, social democracy — that fascism served the bourgeoisie by annihilating all independent organisations of the working class, including even the most servile of social-democratic and trade-unionist labour organisations.

Historic twins, maybe. Social Democracy, by betraying the working class in 1918-20, might even have deserved the title of father of fascism. But the fascist beast could grow and perform its function of protecting the bourgeoisie in the conditions of extreme crisis only by devouring social democracy.

After Hitler's victory and the blatant threat to Russia posed by fascist Germany, bureaucratic self-defence decreed no analysis of the mistakes that allowed Hitler's victory; but panic led to quick changes. Yesterday all were fascists, other than the CPs, thus covering the class differentiation between the social democratic workers and the bourgeois masters of Hitler in a fog of hysterical ultra-left verbiage. Now, after 1934-5, 'fascism' was ultra-specific: German militarism, revanchism, the threat of war.

It was not the last throw of a desperate German capitalism and therefore something other capitalisms would resort to in similar conditions. It was an option, a policy. It could be fended off in alliance with 'democratic' capitalists, such as those of France or Britain, jailers of large sections of the world's population in colonies where they too practised all that was oppressive and savage inside Germany and Italy.

So specific became the preoccupation with Germany, that even in the midst of an international anti-fascist crusade orchestrated by the Stalinists, the French CP offered a United Front against Germany to anti-German 'patriotic' French... fascists! Where before all had been fascists, now no fascists existed as necessary enemies except... the German state.

All criteria, all class analysis or understanding were thus pulped in the frantic zig-zags of the Stalinist machine, which ground them in its erratic path like a great tank out of control.

There were further lurches. During the Hitler-Stalin pact, the CPs made explicit pro-German-imperialist propaganda. In Belgium and France, the CPs were allowed a

high degree of tolerance by the Nazi authorities in the year up to the invasion of Russia in June 1941.

There was then another turn. Right up to the 1960s, the CP press campaigned against Germany, and then West Germany, by consistently implying that fascism, and a danger of fascist resurgence, was something peculiar to and rooted in the German character! This campaign against a non-existent incipient fascism premised on anti-German racism deposited a thick foul-smelling pool of filth which any incredulous reader can explore in the files of the CPGB press for the '50s and '60s.

From this history no idea could emerge — just the association of fascism with vileness and repression.

The Trotskyist tendency analysed fascism consistently with the criteria of the class struggle and of Marxist science, thus enriching the heritage of the Communist International.

Normally the bourgeoisie rules through the acquiescence of the masses, secured by priests and/or reformists, and backed by limited force. The disruption following world war I generated mass proletarian movements for state power, which were derailed and defeated by the treachery of the apparatus of the labour movement, which either remained loyal to the bourgeoisie (Germany) or else bungled the job of organising working class power (Hungary, Italy). The normal state apparatus showed itself insufficient to beat down the masses in any direct clash. Armies have ties with the civilian population; their possible use for police work is strictly limited. (Though those limits have been much broader in some 'third world' experiences, especially Chile).

The bourgeoisie needed auxiliary forces to protect it — a mass mobilisation. But of whom? Mussolini in Italy provided the answer. On a basis of nationalism, mysticism, ill-defined radical criticism of society (ill-defined and therefore easily scrapped later), masses of petty bourgeois and lumpen-proletarians were mobilised to restore 'order'. No longer satisfied by the pre-war harassment and confinement to semi-legality of the labour movement, the bourgeoisie needed to annihilate the organisations of the labour movement and the possibility of independent initiative. The mass forces of fascism achieved that in

bloody battle with the labour movement.

Mussolini, a one-time Marxist who understood the class struggle, consciously moulded a petty bourgeois force to achieve those goals for the bourgeoisie. As Trotsky said regarding him: "A physician can use knowledge of the laws of medicine to poison and kill as well as cure and preserve".

The social preconditions, however, for the growth of fascism in Italy, were the defeat and derailment of the proletarian drive for power, creating disillusion and demoralisation. It was then that serious sections of the petty bourgeoisie could be press-ganged into a samurai squad to maintain the status quo, rather than following a proletarian revolutionary movement.

Once stabilised in power, the mass fascist movement, with its leaders at the centre of the state apparatus, expresses its 'radicalism' by extolling its already-achieved 'revolution'. Some of the thugs are absorbed to strengthen the state apparatus, some purged. Muddled to start with and muddled throughout, any elements that remain 'radical' are helpless before the state machine and the structure of their own movement. The fascist regime, having dealt with the proletariat, gradually becomes a bonapartist police state, raised above society, its original mass base atrophied (e.g. Spain today).

If the essence of fascism is the total destruction of an independent working class movement on any level, then of course we have an additional reason why a class analysis of it has not gained ground on the social democratic and Stalinist left (beyond the banality that fascism is anti-working class capitalist reaction in an extreme form). There is not a vestige of working class political or trade union rights anywhere in the Stalinist states. And a focus on the anatomy of fascist rule and practice, on the specifics of fascist counter-revolution for the working class and its independent organisations, is likely to raise questions on the Stalinist political counter-revolution, against which the double standards, powerful as they are, of the Stalinists and those influenced by them, might not prove strong enough. If you think that Russia and China are socialist, it won't be the lack of free trade unions, the right of political parties, etc., that you will focus on in the fascist phenomenon. Conversely, if you wish to present Stalinism as the necessary product of revolutionary proletarian

action (Bolshevism), you will wish to stop short at a general concept of 'totalitarianism' and 'extremism', rather than analyse the specific mechanics of the crushing of working class rights under Stalinism and under fascism.

Certainly it was the clear analysis and description of the stage-by-stage destruction of working class rights in the USSR in the '20s and '30s that allowed Trotsky to analyse clinically the class effects, interactions, and physiognomy of fascism in the '30s. He could agree that "the USSR minus the social structure founded by the October Revolution would be a fascist regime", and still keep in mind the qualitative difference of economic basis. He could agree that a fascist state was a monstrous imposition against which the workers threatened by it should fight to the death, even in defence of bourgeois democratic rights, and still point out the identity of the class character of the economies of the 'democratic' capitalist powers with those of the fascist capitalist powers.

Max Gallo's book is not a Marxist account of fascism, but it is a brilliant day-by-day description of the event which most clearly and dramatically lays bare, as if dissected by a surgeon's scalpel, the anatomy of fascism: the so-called "night of the long knives" in June 1934, the bloody purge of the 'left-wing' Nazis as Hitler settled into a consummated relationship with the German establishment and the so-called National Socialist Workers' Party of Germany settled accounts with itself, its contradictions resolvable only in a bloodbath.

The street power of Nazism against the labour movement was the Brownshirt movement, the SA (Sturmabteilung), organised and led by Ernst Röhm.

In the late '20s the world crisis threw Germany into a desperate impasse. The Weimar Republic was a feeble weed. The majority party of the workers, the SPD, was a bulwark of conservatism, which had frustrated and betrayed the revolution of 1918-19 and put down communist risings in blood in 1919 and 1921. The CP was powerful, able to gain six million votes in elections, even having its own armed militia, as did the SPD.

But the CP helped the Nazis, not only by sometimes siding with them against the so-called 'social-fascists', but also by

mimicking their nationalism. "The unjust Versailles Treaty imposed on Germany after the war must be reversed. It is the cause of all our woes", screamed Hitler, adding that it was the result not of defeat in war but of Jewish and socialist treachery at home. "Yes", echoed the CP, "down with Versailles, the cause of all our woes, but only the Communists can do it". Creating a 'National Bolshevism' in an attempt to steal the Nazis' thunder, the CP only undermined itself.

The petty bourgeois and many workers flocked to Hitler at the polls after 1928. Rather than the CP outflanking the Nazis, the Nazis outflanked the CP on the field of nationalist 'anti-capitalism', blaming 'Jewish capital' for Germany's ills through both Versailles and Bolshevism.

Neither the conservative Social-Democrats, appealing to the bourgeois state to deal with the fascists, nor the ultra-left CP, seemed to offer a way forward to workers. Only by drawing the eight million social democratic voters towards it in united working class action could the CP have broken the log-jam, creating thus a pole of attraction for the demoralised and cynical petty bourgeoisie and for disillusioned workers, especially the unemployed. Instead it aided the Nazis, sometimes wittingly.

In January 1933 Hitler became Chancellor in a coalition government under President von Hindenburg. It was a gamble by the bourgeoisie. It only won because the labour movement offered no resistance, though the destruction of the Italian labour movement by fascism was very recent memory.

It was not physical weakness. The SA thugs beat up Jews and socialists, broke strikes, and were a force to be reckoned with, but they did not have command of the streets. In the street battles in Berlin the CP militia remained the strongest force — used, alas, against Social Democrats as well as against Nazis, and sometimes in alliance with Nazis against social democrats. But a decision at the top of the Comintern and the party, together with the bewilderment to be expected amongst the ranks of the CP, led to the peaceful surrender of the most powerful CP in Europe.

Within weeks the party was outlawed and its organisations smashed and driven underground.

And the victors? Hitler manoeuvred deli-

cately. The masses of the SA found themselves bewildered. They had made their 'revolution', their Führer was Chancellor. The Jewish scum were on the run, their shops were being smashed and looted. The Bolshevik traitors had surprisingly surrendered and thousands were in concentration camps. The Social Democrats, led by Wels, had crawled to the the Nazis in the Reichstag, offering loyalty, and had been contemptuously spurned. The Weimar weed was being uprooted.

And yet what had changed? Was this 'the Revolution'? It left the SA very much the have-nots. They remained mobilised still — but for what? Those ruling and owning were not Bolsheviks, nor Jews — but own and control they did. The SA had no power. It had chased away those it took as its enemies, but it was still encircled in the same social conditions, of the lumpen-proletariat or petty-bourgeoisie, as if it made no difference. True, the SA could bully and carouse as cock of the walk, with no Communists to worry about. But what next?

In the SA barracks there began to be talk about a "Second Revolution". Röhm would look to the interests of the front-line SA men. Adolf would not desert them. He would stop hobnobbing with the big capitalists and industrialists. Tensions and hatred emerged against rivals in power — the official army, the Reichswehr, and certain aristocratic Nazis like Göring, who were then concerned with integrating the top of the Nazi party with the highest echelons of German capitalist society.

The SA were now redundant, though they didn't know it and had no idea of what to do about a 'Second Revolution' except talk of it — these addicts of that 'socialism of idiots', anti-Semitism, these deluded and envious dupes who had hated and resented the organised labour movement, these nation-lovers, whose nation was owned by the monopolists and plutocrats, these Führer-worshippers whose Führer worshipped the existing power and was insinuating, ingratiating, respectabilising himself into it and before it.

For 17 months this lasted, tensions building, incidents multiplying, clashes with the army being frequent. The rowdy Nazi masses, resembling barbarians not knowing what to do with the

city they have — apparently — conquered, or with themselves, remind one almost of medieval plebeian revolutionaries, or perhaps mutineers in mercenary armies, in an impasse. Except that the essence of the impasse consisted in the destruction of the labour movement, and the consequent blocking of the possibility of social revolution — destruction which they themselves had achieved.

The Nazi movement had long been polarised between the lumpen thugs and top Nazis like Göring, integrated with the bourgeoisie and the Junkers. Hitler hesitated. Röhm made bombastic pronouncements about the 'second revolution'; the redundant SA rabble cheered and became rowdier still. The issue came to a head as von Hindenburg's life drew to an end. The service chiefs promised Hitler support as supreme head of state in return for *order*. That meant destroying the SA.

The SA was sent on leave. On the night of June 30, 1934, the killer squads of the SS (an élite subdivision of the SA) and the Gestapo struck, picking off key SA leaders and butchering hundreds of them and settling old scores in passing. Strasser, defunct figurehead of the one-time Nazi 'left' and founder of the party, perished. Röhm was executed in prison. The SA, disarmed and cowed, was sent on *indefinite* leave. Hitler went on the radio and justified the events. Soon Hindenburg died: and Hitler got supreme power.

Stability, coldly efficient totalitarianism, purged of instability and talk of a 'second revolution', was consolidated.

Gallo's book describes the rank and file Nazis, their moods and their thinking, in great detail. It is the radical face of Nazism he examines, the demagogic face, which is not mere demagogy for many of its dupes.

Indirectly it is a very profound indictment of the German CP and SPD. For such forms of plebeian 'radicalism' only occur *after* betrayal and culpable bankruptcy by the workers' parties. Terrifyingly, also, Gallo's portrait of the ideas and attitudes of the 'left' Nazis show them to be *ideologically* close to what has been 'mainstream communism' for nearly half a century. Such is the measure of the degeneration entailed by Stalinism. Trotsky commented, 45 years ago: "... under present conditions in Germany, the slogan of a 'people's revolution'

wipes away the ideological demarcation between Marxism and fascism and reconciles part of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie to the ideology of fascism, allowing

them to think that they are not compelled to make a choice, because in both camps it is all a matter of a people's revolution". Gallo's book fills out the picture. S.M.

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