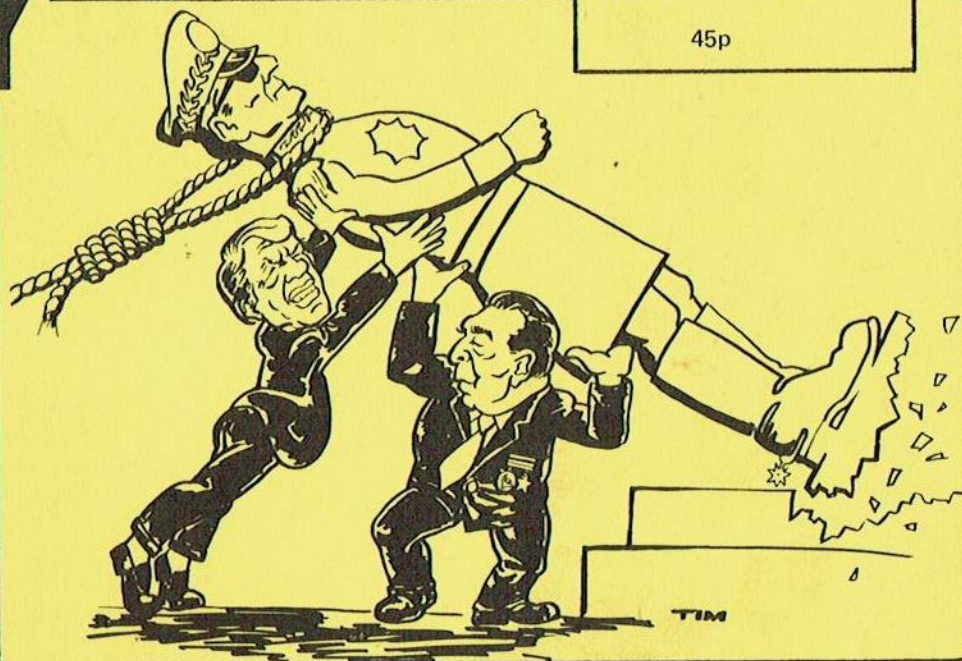


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INSIDE: ● Mandel's dance with Stalinism
● The significance of the Transitional Programme ● The U.S. SWP 40 years on.



EDITORIAL

A not unexpected eruption

In Britain, as we go to press, huge events are taking place. Industry is grinding to a halt; panic buying has begun; each day brings news of new strikes and new lay-offs. The scene is beginning to resemble the 1926 General Strike, though it is only 70,000 lorry drivers that have brought about the latest crisis.

On the one side a crisis-ridden Labour government lines up strikebreaking regional emergency committees, comprising top civil servants, police and army chiefs; on the other side the lorry drivers' strike committees issue passes to allow only essential supplies through picket lines, while flying pickets patrol docks, factories and warehouses.

Employers, the Tories and the media scream in frantic impotence and demand new draconian laws against the unions—which nobody knows how to enforce. Indeed, leading Tory Peter Walker, frightened above all at the prospect of a Tory government being returned to office under conditions of mass workers' struggles, has publicly called for support to Callaghan's strikebreaking efforts and denounced "men who are endeavouring to bring down this government and are fighting its economic policies with even greater tenacity than they fought the last Conservative government".

But if the capitalist class faces a challenge to its authority and a profound crisis of leadership, so too does the working class. While the lorry drivers have successfully forced their leaders into calling official action, traindrivers are being headed off into token action for a diversionary productivity deal, and manual workers in the public sector find themselves once again saddled with leaders who have time and again sold their wages struggles short and who now plan only "guerrilla" strikes rather than all out action for their £60/35 hour week claim.

The TUC leaders who last year sat back and allowed army scabbing against the firemen are this year clearly prepared to allow troops to be used against tanker drivers,

lorry drivers or public sector workers.

Meanwhile in the Labour Party the 'lefts' who have surfaced once again to make vague statements in support of the lorry drivers continue to run from any real challenge to the Callaghan-Healey leadership. They can be exposed in their true colours in the course of this struggle.

In fighting for drivers' strike committees to be extended into the building in each area of local *councils of action*, drawing delegations from other strike committees, stewards committees, union branches, trades councils, workers' political parties and other working class bodies, the Workers Socialist League has been following a consistent perspective for the development of the independent strength of the working class and its control over society.

We alone have regarded the fight against all four phases of wage control as the central point of conflict with the Labour traitors, and one which carried the potential of such explosive developments as are now taking place. As long ago as 1977 when other groups were still talking of the "quiescence" of the working class we pointed to the possibility that wages struggles, bursting through the bureaucratic restraints placed on the working class by Labour and TUC leaders, could erupt to produce a turn in the class struggle comparable to the scale of the May-June 1968 events in France. Today, though the process has taken time to develop, we see a verification of that analysis.

Now is the time to intervene boldly in these struggles, fighting for such political demands as can most sharply draw the line between the working class and its bureaucratic leaders, expose the demagogy of the Labour and TUC 'lefts', and point to the necessity for the construction of a new, revolutionary leadership in the working class, as fought for by the Workers Socialist League.

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The Significance of the Transitional Programme

Reprinted from *Trotskyism Today*, supplement to
Socialist Press No 40 (August 11, 1976). By John Lister

The Transitional Programme for Marxists today embodies a revolutionary tradition, a method, and key principles which form the only road for resolving the immense crisis of leadership confronting the working class and oppressed masses of the world.

This crisis of leadership manifests itself in differing forms in different countries. In Britain the reformist Labour government in league with the Liberal Party and the Confederation of British Industry on the one hand, and the trade union bureaucracy on the other, has carried out historically unprecedented attacks on British working class living standards in defence of capitalism.

In Italy, the mass strength of the so-called Communist Party is prostituted by its Stalinist leadership to a corrupt back-door deal with the capitalist Christian Democratic Party while all proposals of a Communist Party-Socialist Party government are rejected. In Spain, the Stalinists go so far as discussions with the fascists.

In the Middle East, the bourgeois-nationalist leaders of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation confronted by a concerted right-wing attempt to smash their bases of operations and silence the revolutionary struggle for Palestinian self-determination, turn for support and protection *not* to the Arab masses but to the bourgeois leaders of the Arab states. In Africa, bourgeois nationalist leaders retard the armed struggle necessary to liberate Southern Africa.

And in Eastern Europe the mass struggles of the working class against attacks on their living standards by the Stalinist bureaucracy confront the need for an organised political leadership with the programme and perspective for the *political revolution*.

Every one of these struggles shows clearly the need for

a new political leadership to carry it through to a successful conclusion—to the taking of state power by the working class.

The implications of this crisis of working class leadership were recognised by Trotskyists in 1933. It was in that year that the full extent of the degeneration of the Third (Communist) International, the international movement founded by Lenin and Trotsky on the gains of the victorious October 1917 revolution in Russia, were exposed in practice for all to see.

The Second International, the mass-based international grouping of reformist social democratic parties, had shown its true counter-revolutionary colours in 1914 with the outbreak of the First imperialist World War. In country after country, reformist leaders had turned their backs on proletarian internationalism and voted support for their "own" bourgeoisie in the war. And having taken this stand they became and still remain simply the left appendages of bourgeois rule, the recruiting sergeants and labour lieutenants for the military and profit-making machines of capital.

Lenin and a handful of anti-war internationalists split there and then from the social-patriots, declaring the Second International dead. The Third International, long proclaimed a Bolshevik goal during the 1917 crisis, was in fact founded in March 1919. Its platform was proletarian internationalism, its main enemy opportunism, social-patriotism, the agents of the bourgeoisie within the leading ranks of the workers' movement.

This platform remained intact so long as the leadership within the International itself was a revolutionary leadership. But the emergence within the Soviet Union of the Stalinist bureaucracy, its increasing dominance after 1924,

and its reactionary nationalist perspective of 'socialism in one country' began to attack the very foundations of the International.

From a movement based on revolutionary Marxism for the furtherance of international revolution, it began to be transformed into a movement based on blind obedience, blind empiricism and eventually simply on the furtherance of the narrow self-interests of the Stalinist Soviet bureaucracy.

Disastrous opportunist policies in 1925-27 led to the Stalinists becoming compromised with the British TUC during the General Strike and with the reactionary Chinese nationalist party, the Kuomintang, which murdered millions of Chinese Communists and militants in 1927.

Only a year later that right-wing orientation was to be suddenly and empirically reversed. The long-predicted Soviet economic crisis warned of by the Left Opposition set in. The bureaucracy's constant refusal to undertake long-term *planned* industrialisation or systematic collectivisation had brought complete disruption to the economy, and cultivated a whole layer within the Soviet society prepared to fight to restore capitalism.

Stalin and his supporters suddenly recognised that here hung in the balance the very power base of the bureaucracy itself. Without the nationalised property relations of the October Revolution, the positions of power and privilege they had established would be in jeopardy. Hastily, with no planning or understanding, Stalin declared this the start of the "Third Period", the 'final assault' against capitalism, and launched an all-out crash campaign of dispossession of the wealthy peasants, bureaucratically managed industrialisation, and a purge of the right-wing both from the Russian and the Comintern party bureaucracies.

The absurd ultra-leftism which led Communist Party members to denounce social democrats as "social fascists" began in this period from these material roots. The Comintern, seen by Stalin only as an extension of the Russian bureaucracy, was "cleansed" of all dissenting voices and equipped with a bankrupt and disastrously sectarian programme—a programme which was to make possible the crushing of the most powerful workers' movement in Europe under the heel of fascism.

Split in two by the policies of the Comintern and denied any practical lead by either reformist or Stalinist leaderships, the German working class was exposed to the brutal attacks of Hitler's fascist bands.

The failure of the German Communist Party to offer the slightest resistance to Hitler before his victory in March 1933 caused Trotsky at once to declare that a new Communist Party had to be built in Germany. But he held back on the call for a new International, to see if the traumatic shock of the German events could possibly provoke splits or discussion within the Comintern. Nothing of the sort took place. In July 1933, therefore, Trotsky declared that "It is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew". He showed in the article why this conclusion had not been drawn earlier, and why it had to be drawn at this point.

"Theoretically, the collapse of the KPD [German Communist Party] still left two courses open to the Stalinist bureaucracy: either a complete review of the politics and the regime; or, on the contrary, complete strangulation of all signs of life in the sections of the

Comintern. The Left Opposition was guided by this theoretical possibility when, after advancing the slogan of a new party for Germany, it still left open the question of the fate of the Comintern . . .

"The Moscow leadership has not only proclaimed as infallible the policy which guaranteed victory to Hitler, but has also prohibited all discussion of what had occurred. And this shameful interdiction was not violated nor overthrown. No national congresses; no international congresses; no discussions at party meetings; no discussions in the press! *An organisation which was not roused by the thunder of fascism and which submits docilely to such outrageous acts of the bureaucracy demonstrates thereby that it is dead and that nothing can ever revive it.* To say this openly and publicly is our direct duty toward the proletariat and its future. In all our subsequent work it is necessary to take as our point of departure the historical collapse of the official Communist International."

Writings 1932-33, pp.305-6 (emphasis added).

The Third International had died—but in the process its leaders had been fought on every issue, and the line of Bolshevism upheld by Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The passing of the Comintern onto the opposite side to the fight for revolutionary leadership had seen the steeling of a small but crucial nucleus of cadres internationally, experienced in the struggle against all forms of bureaucratic opportunism and centrism. The Left Opposition did *not* begin with a blank sheet or the need to start anew.

But the construction of a new International was still a huge step posing the gathering of forces and the careful drawing of a balance sheet of the experience of sixteen years since October 1917.

Already in December 1932 this had begun with the publication by the International Left Opposition of a document entitled *The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods*. This stressed the essential continuity of revolutionary principle embodied in the Opposition:

"The International Left Opposition stands on the ground of the first four Congresses of the Comintern . . . all the essential principles (in relation to imperialism and the bourgeois state; to democracy and reformism; problems of insurrection; the dictatorship of the proletariat; on relations with the peasantry and the oppressed nations; soviets; work in the trade unions; parliamentarism; the policy of the united front) remain even today the highest expression of proletarian strategy in the epoch of the general crisis of capitalism."

Writings 1932-33, pp.51-2.

These principles had now to be developed to take into account the emergence of a new form of labour bureaucracy feeding off the revolutionary gains of the workers' state—Stalinism. It was necessary to pose the fight for political revolution to overthrow Stalinism while unconditionally defending the Soviet workers' state against imperialism. Trotsky was to devote a great deal of attention to precise analysis of this problem.

But also crucial—now more than ever for the small forces of the Opposition—was not simply to restate and strengthen the basic principles of proletarian internationalism summed up in Lenin's 21 points for acceptance of parties into the Comintern, but to develop a tactical approach to the winning of a mass base of support in the working class and peasantry of each country. The seventh

of the eleven points of the 1932 document was therefore:

"Recognition of the necessity to mobilise the masses under *transitional slogans* corresponding to the concrete situation in each country, and particularly under *democratic slogans* insofar as it is a question of struggle against feudal relations, national oppression or different varieties of openly imperialist dictatorship (fascism, Bonapartism, etc)."

Ibid, p.53, (original emphasis).

This was the more important when we remember the objective difficulties faced in building a new International. The Second International had been built alongside the basic organisations of the working class in each country, and commanded the support of millions of workers through their unions and reformist parties. The Third International had established itself on the prestige of the Russian Revolution in a period of revolutionary upsurge and had quickly found a mass base in a number of countries.

But the decision to build the Fourth International had to be taken in the period of the German defeat, the temporary ebb of revolutionary movements, and on the basis of an understanding of the degeneration and betrayal of the Comintern and the bureaucratisation of the world's first workers' state.

Only the most concrete programme advanced in each country, the most rigorous defence of principle, the most flexible use of tactics such as the united front could enable the forces of the Fourth International to reach out to the masses.

Yet the changing orientation of the first years of the Comintern had produced important lessons for the new movement. The First Congress of the Comintern of course had centred on differentiating the new International from the bankrupt remnants of the Second International. It had been convened on the crest of the wave of international revolutionary struggles throughout post-war Europe. The 'Invitation to the Conference' showed clearly that immediate revolution was seen as the perspective:

"2. The task of the proletariat now is to seize State power immediately. The seizure of State power means the destruction of the State apparatus of the bourgeoisie and the organisation of a new proletarian apparatus of power."

The main attention was not therefore on any transitional steps to revolution but more on ramming home the full weight of the betrayal of the Second International, the strength of the working class and the possibility for a rapid wave of revolutions. The May Day Manifesto of the Communist International in 1919 stated:

"The communist revolution is growing before our eyes. A Soviet republic in Russia, a Soviet republic in Hungary, a Soviet republic in Bavaria—these are the results of the recent struggles of the working class.

"The whole of Germany is shaking under the strain of civil war . . . In France huge workers' demonstrations have begun . . . In Italy the struggle has reached boiling point and the communists are calling for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In England strikes have taken on an epidemic character . . .

"Before a year has passed, the whole of Europe will be Soviet. In every country the workers have realised that the decisive moment has come . . ."

But of course the great revolutionary hopes for the "great International Soviet Republic" by 1920 were to be

dashed on the one side by the betrayals of the still-influential leaders of the social democratic parties, energetically working with the bourgeoisie, using troops and all forms of repression against the working class, and on the other by the inadequacy of revolutionary leadership—the lack of genuine Bolshevik-type parties outside Russia.

Increasingly the attention of the Communist International was forced to turn from simply summoning the masses to action—action which in many, many cases workers themselves were clearly prepared to take—to the question of exposing and defeating the treacherous reformist *leaders* and building mass Communist Parties to lead revolutions in each country.

But the defeats suffered by the working class in the year between the First and Second Congresses brought a more penetrating analysis of reformism and the labour bureaucracy. Trotsky pointed out in a meeting in August 1920 the undeniable fact that:

"If, since the First Congress, the world proletariat has suffered defeats and has sometimes had to retreat, that was because it did not follow the road pointed out by the Communist International."

Lenin also recognised that the task of combatting the Second International and its reactionary leaders was far from over, and that the acute crisis of capitalism by no means brought automatic revolution or automatic collapse:

"Opportunism is our chief enemy . . . Without the support of the opportunist leadership the bourgeoisie could not maintain themselves in power."

The Second Congress focussed on these two key questions—adopting the rigorous series of 21 statutes drafted by Lenin to exclude any opportunist bureaucrats from straying into the International from the Second International and to purge the ranks of careerists of all types; and at the same time giving attention to combatting "ultra-leftism" which, Lenin pointed out, "leads to an incorrect appreciation of the role and tasks of the party in relation to the class and the masses and of the obligation of revolutionary communists to work in bourgeois parliaments and reactionary trade unions."

The 'Theses on the Trade Union Movement, Factory Councils and the Communist International', passed at the Second Congress contained a section on workers' control showing how the daily struggles of workers on jobs and wages pose the necessity for workers' control—which arms them for the fight for socialist revolution:

". . . because of this economic disorder, it is the duty of the Communist Party to organise *all* workers, and to arm them for the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship by extending and deepening the struggle which they all understand, for workers' control over production."

(emphasis added).

The Theses called for Communists to work to win control of the reformist trade unions and transform them into instruments of revolution. Other Theses outlined how revolutionaries should work in relation to bourgeois parliaments.

Yet even so the importance of a tactical approach to the masses through a programme of demands was seen as very much a secondary question at the Second Congress—the main attention remained focussed on summoning the masses to revolution.

By the time of the Third Congress, however, in June-July 1921, the Comintern clearly had to reckon with a new objective situation internationally, in which the fight for

immediate revolution could only come after serious building of support within the mass workers' movement. Attention had to be given to the tactical method and approach of the new Communist Parties themselves. Trotsky wrote later that:

"With the Third Congress it is realised that the post-war revolutionary ferment is over . . . The turn is taken to winning the masses, using the united front, that is organising the masses, on a programme of transitional demands."

In the 'Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern' drafted by Trotsky and Varga the problem is sketched in the opening section:

"The revolutionary movement at the termination of the imperialist war and after this war is marked by an amplitude unequalled in history . . . This mighty wave, however, does not succeed in overthrowing world capitalism, not even European capitalism."

But after analysing the economic situation, the conclusion is that, despite some appearances capitalism has in no way permanently restored equilibrium:

"At bottom the question of re-establishing capitalism on the foundations outlined means the following: will the working class be willing to make under the new and incomparably more difficult conditions those sacrifices which are indispensable for reinstalling the stable conditions of its own slavery, harsher and crueller than those which reigned before the war? . . . The present state of the world proletariat furnishes the least justification for a prognosis of this kind."

Instead of renouncing hopes of revolution, the Communist Parties must *prepare* for future struggles and upheavals.

"40. The fundamental task of the Communist Party in the current crisis is to lead the present defensive struggles of the proletariat, to extend their scope, to deepen them, to unify them, and in harmony with the march of events, to transform them into decisive political struggles for the ultimate goal . . .

"41. Whether the revolutionary movement develops in the next period at a swift or slow tempo, the Communist Party must in either case remain the *party of action*."

It was to be this approach, summed up in 1921, which contained the key to the method of the revolutionaries who fought to prepare a programme and orientation for the Fourth International. In particular, the concept of fighting to turn and develop defensive actions by the working class and its allies into actions which *organise* the class and lead workers to challenge the capitalist system itself is vital to the method of the Transitional Programme.

Indeed this method runs as the common thread through the Bolshevik mobilisation of the workers and peasants for the October Revolution, the early years of the Comintern, the struggles of the Left Opposition and the Transitional Programme itself.

It runs diametrically counter to the empirical and wooden understanding of the Stalinist bureaucracy with its opportunist adaptations nationally and internationally.

For the empiricist there is simply *either* offensive or defensive. And for the bureaucrat the offensive simply means giving an arrogant command while the retreat means grovelling capitulation to the enemy. For them there is no idea of revolutionary preparation for forward movement within temporary defeats.

So, for the Stalinists, the ebb of international revolution after 1923 implied simply a retreat had to be made

from *all* of the goals of socialism. Instead they turned to compromise with the rich peasant in Russia and the labour bureaucracy or bourgeois nationalist leaders elsewhere (TUC and Kuomintang).

And when crisis struck the bureaucratically dislocated Russian economy in 1928, it meant for the Stalinists a complete *reversal* of all policies—from class collaboration to the grotesque ultra-left sectarianism of "social fascism"; from talk of "restabilised" capitalism to talk of the "final crisis".

There was no way for the Stalinists to find a principled road avoiding these two completely destructive poles of policy at home or abroad.

But Lenin had taught otherwise, and the Left Opposition had based its fight against Stalinism on his revolutionary method:

"The first stage in our struggle was to create a genuine Communist Party, so that we could know with whom we were talking and in whom we could have complete confidence . . . The second stage, after we have created the party, must be to *learn how to prepare the revolution*. In many countries we have not even begun to learn how to win the leadership."

The 'Theses on Tactics' at the Third Congress highlighted perhaps for the first time the huge gulf between the dangers of the objective situation and the unpreparedness of working class leadership:

" . . . despite the objectively revolutionary situation, political and economic, . . . the majority of the workers are not yet under communist influence . . . From the day of its foundation the Communist International has clearly and unambiguously made its goal the formation not of small communist sects, *trying by propaganda and agitation only* to establish their influence over the working masses, but participation in the struggle of the working masses, the direction of this struggle in a Communist spirit, and the creation in the course of this struggle of experienced, large, revolutionary, mass communist parties . . ."

Towards implementing this turn, the 'Theses on Tactics' included a prominent section on 'Partial Struggles and Partial Demands' which was to form the basic starting point for the tactics of the Transitional Programme. It stressed that:

"The Communist Parties do not put forward any minimum programme to strengthen and improve the tottering structure of capitalism. The destruction of that structure remains their guiding aim and their immediate mission. But to carry out this mission the Communist Parties must put forward demands whose fulfilment is an immediate and urgent working class need, and they must fight for these demands in mass struggle, regardless of whether or not they are compatible with the profit economy of the capitalist class or not . . .

"If the demands correspond to the vital needs of broad proletarian masses and if these masses feel that they cannot exist unless these demands are met, then the struggle for these demands will become the starting point for the struggle for power."

Here again, then, is contained the concept of defensive demands being turned by Marxist intervention into the basis of a revolutionary *offensive*.

"In place of the minimum programme of the reformists and centrists, the Communist International puts the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for a

system of demands which in their totality disintegrate the power of the bourgeoisie, organise the proletariat, represent stages in the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, and each of which expresses in itself the need of the broadest masses, even if the masses themselves are not yet consciously in favour of the proletarian dictatorship . . .

"These partial demands anchored in the needs of the broadest masses, must be put forward by the Communist Parties in a way which not only leads the masses to struggle, but by its very nature also organises them."

(emphasis added).

Here is the model of the Transitional Programme's "system of *transitional demands*" which must stem from "today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably [lead] to the final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

And of course, at their base, the Comintern's 'Theses on Tactics' depended, as do today's transitional demands, upon the economic analysis of capitalist crisis insisted upon by Lenin and Trotsky, but scoffed at by reformists, centrists and all forms of opportunist:

"The revolutionary character of the present epoch consists precisely in this, that the most modest conditions of life for the working masses are incompatible with the existence of capitalist society, and that therefore the fight for even the most modest demands grows into the fight for communism"

(emphasis added).

Such a statement was no pious expression of hope. It had behind it the living experience of the role of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution as well as the continuing obvious economic dislocation of capitalist Europe.

The Third Congress went on to endorse, in the 'Theses' on the work of the Red International of Labour Unions, a "programme of action", which included demands for full pay for the unemployed, and an end to business secrets:

"For this purpose, special control commissions must be set up, to supervise raw materials, fuel, orders . . . Specially elected control commissions must thoroughly investigate the financial relations between the concern in question and other concerns, to do which it will be necessary to suggest to the workers as an immediate practical task to put an end to commercial secrecy."

Here the mass appeal of the demand for an end to business secrets is recognised together with the importance of the dual-power organisations—factory committees, "control commissions"—which pave the way for the struggle for power. Yet in each case the demands focus not on *attack* but on *defence*—of jobs, of living standards, of the means of production against closure. The living struggles of the working class against capitalist attack are seen clearly as the starting point for organisation and political education of the as yet non-political masses. "To the masses!" was the battle-cry of the Third Congress—with its crucial lessons for today's revolutionaries carried forward in the Transitional Programme.

The Fourth Congress of the Communist International developed further on this orientation, particularly focussing on the tactic of the "united front" of working class parties against capitalist attack. This slogan, again starting from the *defence* of the working class, was designed both to unite the *ranks* of the workers in struggle *and* to expose and isolate the treacherous reformist leaderships of the mass organisations, winning the working class to the banner of revolution.

The first five years of the Comintern thus laid up an invaluable heritage for revolutionaries—a record and a platform scorned and rejected, distorted and inverted by the Stalinists who transformed nearly every single decision into its bureaucratic-conservative opposite.

The real lessons of the defeats, blunders and setbacks of the 1920s were therefore learned not by the mass of workers, nor by their bureaucratic leaders, but only by the cadres of the Left Opposition. In 1933 these cadres confronted the task of building anew on this heritage.

From the beginning it was understood by Trotsky and others that:

"A new International cannot be prepared without practical participation in the unfolding events. To counterpose a programmatic discussion to the revolutionary struggle would, of course, be false. It is necessary to combine the two."

(Declaration of the Bolshevik Leninist Delegation at the Conference of Left Socialist and Communist Organisations, *Writings 1933-34*, p.44).

The fight for the Fourth International therefore continued on several fronts. On the one side the continued critique of Stalinism and reformism, with the advocacy of alternative programme and perspective in the major struggles emerging internationally, particularly in France and Spain. At the same time a process of internal clarification and discussion began within the ranks of the Opposition on a balance sheet of the past struggle and perspective for the Fourth International. And while proceeding with these struggles, pressure was also brought to bear on a number of centrist groupings internationally which still clung to illusions in the Comintern or social democracy—trying to persuade them to make a break with these bankrupt bodies and to declare for the Fourth International.

Almost at once the emergence of acute class struggle in France with the threat of fascist repression presented a challenge for the development of the Opposition. In the face of the complete bankruptcy of the mass Stalinist and reformist parties, only Trotskyists put forward from the very beginning a comprehensive programme for working class self-defence against fascism. In March 1934 Trotsky declared "France is now the key to the situation" and called for the arming of the working class, along with the setting up of a proletarian militia to oppose fascism. This declaration was followed in June 1934 by a much more comprehensive "Programme of Action for France", which distilled many of the most basic lessons of method and tactics both from the Bolshevik experience and from the German defeat of 1933.

The "Programme of Action" in many respects exactly anticipates demands of the Transitional Programme four years later—though the sliding scale of wages and sliding scale of hours were not included and appear not to have been thought of in 1934.

Prominent among the "Programme"'s demands were the call for the abolition of business secrets; the fight for workers' control exercised through committees of workers, of peasants and of small functionaries; a series of demands including the shortened working week and increased wages, equal pay for women; nationalisation of banks, key industries and transport; monopoly of foreign trade; an alliance of workers and small farmers; workers' control of social services; disbanding of the police; political rights for soldiers; and the call for a workers' and peasants' government based on local independent committees of workers and peasants.

It was followed in November 1934 by Trotsky's pamphlet *Whither France?* which laid stress on the acute crisis confronting the French working class and the necessity for bold leadership to avert the dangers of fascism. Trotsky stressed the complete betrayal of the social democrats in seeking a road of compromise with the *bourgeois* Radical Party which subordinated the independent interests of the working class to the supposed prejudices of the middle class supporters of the Radicals. Yet less than a year later the Stalinists too would have taken a leading role in formulating precisely such a class-collaborationist policy not only in France but internationally, under the slogan of the "Popular Front". This was formally adopted as policy at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in August 1935.

Under the "Popular Front" all the disastrous class-collaboration of the Stalinists' flirtation with the Chinese Kuomintang was brought back to life, only now alliances were not simply sought with bourgeois nationalists, but with any bourgeois party verbally opposed to fascism.

In various forms this policy has predominated as the one most fitted to the international class collaboration of the Stalinist bureaucracy ever since 1935. Its consequences for the European working class were immediately as destructive as they had been for the Chinese workers and peasants eight years earlier. In France the working class was tied by its mass parties to a bloc with the bourgeoisie which denied any leadership to its revolutionary struggles and left it open to fascist attack. In Spain the impact was even more shattering. During three years of revolutionary civil war, the Popular Front piecemeal sapped the strength of the anti-fascist forces, cut them off from the necessary alliance with the peasantry, demobilised the factory committees and the workers' militia, worked with GPU special detachments to murder Trotskyists and other left-wing militants, and opened the door to the eventual victory of Franco in 1939.

Yet the betrayals of the Popular Front took place at a high point of the international wave of militant resistance which swept through the European and American working class in 1935-7, marked by a surge of sit-down strikes and a determined struggle for unionisation in the United States which gave birth to the CIO confederation.

The contradiction of the ripeness of the situation for revolution and the complete lack of mass revolutionary leadership sharpened to its extreme. The growth of the war danger, which escalated alongside Hitler's imperialist expansion and the growth of national antagonisms between the bourgeois states, reemphasised the need for an *international* party of revolution to rally the most militant and determined layers of the proletariat to the struggle for socialism.

In summing up the political balance of forces at the time of the Founding Conference of the new International, which was held in Paris in September 1938, Trotsky pointed to both the strengths and the weaknesses of the movement:

"At present, sections of the Fourth International exist in thirty countries. True, they are only the vanguard of the vanguard. . . But the position of the revolutionary vanguard is far more favourable today than it was twenty-five years ago. The main conquest is that before the war there already exist in all the most important countries of the world tested cadres, numbering hundreds and thousands of revolutionists in growing numbers, welded together by the unity of a doctrine, and tested in the school of cruelest persecutions by the imperialist bourgeoisie, the Social Democracy and,

in particular, the Stalinist Mafia.

"The Second, the Third and the Amsterdam Internationals cannot at present convene their congresses, because they are paralysed by their dependence on imperialism and because they are torn asunder by "national" contradictions. On the contrary, the sections of the Fourth International, despite their extremely meagre resources, the difficulties of obtaining visas, the murder of their secretary and the hail of repressions, were able in the most critical moment to convene their international congress and adopt unanimous decisions in which the tasks of the present titanic struggle are formulated precisely and concretely, on the basis of all historic experience."

(Writings 1938-39)

But progress was hard for the International which was in Trotsky's words "born amid the roar of defeats". The dead weight of the betrayals of two mass Internationals weighed down on the living struggle of Trotskyists for the building of revolutionary parties. The method of the programme—the demands, the tactical approach to the masses—could not be hoped alone to overcome the huge difficulties objectively posed by history.

In discussion in April 1939, Trotsky compared the previous period to the period of reaction after the 1905 revolution in Russia when:

"Everybody invented slogans and methods to win the masses and nobody won them—they were desperate. In this time the only thing we could do was to educate the cadres and they were melting away. There was a series of splits to the right or to the left as to syndicalism and so on. Lenin remained with a small group, a sect, in Paris, but with confidence that there would be new possibilities of a rise. It came in 1913. We had a new tide, but then came the war to interrupt this development. During the war there was a silence as of death among the workers. . .

"Our situation now is incomparably more difficult than that of any other organisation in any other time. . .

"You have. . . the degeneration of the Third International on the one side and the terrible defeat of the Left Opposition with the extermination of the whole group. These facts are a thousand times more convincing for the working class than our poor paper with even the tremendous circulation of 5,000 like the *Socialist Appeal*. . .

"We must wait and prepare—a new element, a new factor in this constellation."

(Against the Stream, Writings 1938-39 pp 252 & 255)

The Second imperialist World War was soon to take a further savage toll of the revolutionary vanguard. murders, repressions, illegality, Stalinist terror squads, jails, tortures and the draft piled up persecution upon persecution on the small forces of internationalists in each country. There were some desertions from the revolutionary camp, and there were the pressures of social patriotism, of Stalinist class collaboration working alongside bourgeois propaganda on the "war for democracy" to create a harsh climate for recruiting new forces.

The Stalinists' murder of Leon Trotsky in 1940 struck a further crucial blow at the political leadership of the International. The post-war problems that beset the International are discussed in our International Document, *Fourth International: Problems and Tasks*.

Yet the principles, the tradition and the method of Bolshevism as fought for throughout the preceding years had been embodied in active form in the programme of the movement—the Transitional Programme. The orientation of revolutionaries towards the two wings of labour bureaucracy; towards worker and peasant; and the method of mo-

bilisation for socialist revolution is distilled in the Programme from the experience of both victorious and defeated revolutions.

Those groups today who seek merely to pay lip-service to the Transitional Programme, who refuse to fight for the demands and slogans it advocates and explains, who retreat from the living struggle for principle and leadership in the daily struggles of the working class internationally are no Trotskyists but propagandists, centrists and sectarians.

In pulling back from the fight to mobilise the class around the programme they buttress the work of the reformists and the Stalinists whose every effort is directed to *preventing* the working class learning its strength and political lessons in struggle. The task is to *raise* the consciousness of the working class from that of trade union struggle to the struggle for power. It is possible to do this because the working class *learns* in its conflicts with capitalism, and its political consciousness is in no way fixed. Trotsky pointed out to all those who simply attack the working class as "backward" or "nationalist":

"The mentality of the class of the proletariat is backward but the mentality is not such a substance as the factories, the mines, the railroads, but is more mobile and under the blows of the objective crisis the millions of unemployed, it can change rapidly."
(May 19th 1938)

It is on this unshakeable confidence in the revolutionary role and strength of the working class, on the firm conviction

of the persecuted International Left Opposition that "the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus", and that the only way forward for the masses must be under the banner of the continuity of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, that the Transitional Programme is based.

And in taking (in many instances for the first time in a Trotskyist party) the programme's transitional demands into the mass struggles of today's workers' movement, testing, enriching and developing our programme and perspectives in the experience of the struggle, the Workers Socialist League is undertaking the material fight to shake off the propagandist and sectarian shackles of the past and to return to the spirit which inspired the Bolshevik pioneers of our movement.

Only in this way can we play our role nationally and internationally in fighting for the reconstruction of the Fourth International on the basis of a thorough examination both of the past and unresolved present theoretical problems of the disorganised array of groupings laying claim to be part of the Trotskyist movement, and the past and present *practice* of those groups and groupings.

And only a Fourth International based on the principles, tradition and method of Trotsky, functioning as an organising centre for the world party of socialist revolution, can resolve the crisis of leadership in the international workers' movement.

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An attempt to find a strategy for Iran

David Whitfield reviews Ahmad Ghotbi's book *Iran: Where to Begin?*, which is published by the Campaign for the Restoration of Trade Union Rights in Iran. The book, price £1.50, is obtainable from CRTURI at BCM 816, London WC1V 6XX.

For twenty-five years, imperialism has been soothed by a comforting belief—a belief that the political life of the Iranian working class had been finally laid to rest in the CIA-organised coup which brought the Shah to power in 1953.

Now a spectre has risen as if from the dead to haunt and darken every waking hour for the lords and minions of imperialism.

Iranian workers have once again moved forward as a class, mobilising their organised strength in mass strike action against dictatorship and imperialism in Iran. The development has completely destroyed any fond illusion that the proletariat in Iran had become powerless or forever unconscious of its own power.

Throughout those twenty-five years, workers faced the vicious oppression of the Shah's labour laws, the constant attacks of SAVAK and periodic brutal repression from the armed forces.

Yet even under these conditions it was never true that Iranian workers ceased to struggle. The central problem that workers faced was *not* the conditions of political oppression, but the critical lack of a leadership to direct their struggles and lead them to a consciousness of their historical tasks as a class.

In the last few months, their militancy has of course been massively extended to new heights. At the same time their activity has been transformed into a movement with a wholly new political significance.

But this transformation of the workers' movement has not abolished the central problem that weakens every struggle of the Iranian proletariat. On the contrary, it has sharpened that problem even more acutely.

In 1901, Lenin wrote that the mass character of the [general democratic] movement does not diminish, but increases, our obligation to establish a strong and centralised organisation of revolutionaries capable of leading the preparatory struggle, every unexpected outbreak, and, finally, the decisive assault!"

Ahmad Ghotbi quotes these and many other words of Lenin in his short and important book *Iran: Where to Begin*.

The importance of this book does not come from the specific, and very limited, political conclusions which Ghotbi reaches. Nor does it come from the elaborate but often confused analysis which lies behind them.

What is vitally important is the central political thrust which again and again breaks through the thin crust formed

by Ghotbi's efforts to develop a thoroughly revolutionary strategy:

"In writing this work we want to show that one is an Iranian Marxist the immediate and most vital task is to concentrate all energies on agitation on the industrial front."

Since this book was published, the development of the struggles in Iran has revealed with stark and potentially tragic clarity the urgency of such a turn to developing the strength, organisation and consciousness of the working class.

Ghotbi's recognition of this necessity forms the core of his work. But around this he builds an eccentric framework to express and develop his argument.

The two main blocks of this are a discussion of Lenin's analysis of economism, and a second discussion of Marxist analyses of the relationship between the bourgeoisie and democracy.

Many of Ghotbi's secondary arguments are at best contentious, but it would be distracting to concentrate on what are often no more than distractions or inconsistencies.

The two sections are united by their conclusions on political strategy—conclusions which follow parallel courses in a misguided direction.

Ghotbi begins the first, and far larger, section, by attempting to analyse and 'differentiate' three kinds of 'working class struggle'. He presents these as 1) economic struggle; 2) political struggle; 3) socialist political struggle.

These categories can be explained roughly as 1) spontaneous militancy; 2) struggles which accept the limits of capitalism and fight for the minimum programme of reformism; 3) struggles which aim beyond the limits of capitalism and fight for the maximum programme of social revolution.

Once he has established this formal and rigid schema to his own satisfaction, Ghotbi uses it as the basis for his lengthy discussion of economism.

Its full significance only becomes obvious in the second, shorter discussion on the nature of 'democracy'. Here Ghotbi again attempts to distinguish three strains: 1) democracy for capital; 2) democracy for labour; 3) socialist democracy.

At one level, the main point of this classification is to emphasise the partial character of the bourgeoisie's commitment to democracy. But from this undeniably correct assessment, Ghotbi breeds a curious hybrid—a three-stage theory of revolution.

The classic bourgeois-democratic revolution, argues Ghotbi, will not provide 'democracy for labour', but it does create the conditions for this to be achieved. Within the capitalist mode of production and bourgeois democracy, workers must use their organised strength in the fight to secure "democracy for labour":

"If the working class wins democracy for labour it will have built itself a base from which it can begin the change-over to socialism. It will be able freely to organise itself for the overthrowing of the capitalist state (which must be smashed into pieces) and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat through soviets of workers. And through these soviets, and only through them, will real democracy, socialist democracy, be practised.

"Therefore, democracy for labour is an indispensable weapon for the working class in its fight to achieve socialist democracy. So if one's aim is socialist democracy, one must begin by fighting for democracy for labour.

As is clear from the scenario, Ghotbi *rejects* the theory of permanent revolution for reasons best known to himself, since he does not argue them.

Scattered remarks on the IMG and the American SWP suggest that his main experience of 'Trotskyism' has been with the Pabloism of the USFI, and also with the sectarian state-capitalism of the British SWP.

Such experience of course often proves demoralising and breeds a totally mistaken contempt for Trotskyism as a revolutionary force.

But while Ghotbi dismisses the theory of permanent revolution, he is determined to reject completely the distortions and falsifications of Stalinism. The whole concept of 'democracy for labour' is clearly put forward in sharp contrast to the counter-revolutionary 'two-stage' theory of revolution, which Stalinism advanced to justify its criminal policies of alliances with the "progressive" national bourgeoisie.

Ghotbi has nothing but scorn and hatred for the 'reformist class-collaborationist policy' of the Stalinist Tudeh Party of Iran.

To counter that monstrous betrayal, he has turned back to the writings of Lenin in the period before the outbreak of the 1917 revolution.

In essence, Ghotbi's book represents an attempt to revive the position held by the Bolsheviks before April 1917 on the relationship between the democratic and the socialist revolution.

In that pre-revolutionary period, the whole of Russian Social Democracy was agreed that the Russian bourgeoisie was incapable of fighting for the gains of the democratic revolution, which would have to be accomplished under the leadership of the proletariat.

Beyond this common starting point, major differences developed between the Mensheviks on the one hand and the Bolsheviks and Trotsky on the other.

Lenin held a perspective of the proletariat seizing state power, as the dominant political force in an alliance with the peasantry. This would establish the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" which, after a certain period, would create the conditions for a second, socialist revolution.

Trotsky later characterised this formulation as "revolutionary and dynamic through and through", but in the period up to April 1917 he polemicised vigorously against what he recognised as the dangers of such a position.

Around the time of the 1905 revolution, he developed the theory of permanent revolution, which was set out in

Results and Prospects. Central to this theory was Trotsky's recognition that once it had seized power, the proletariat would be unable to accomplish the tasks of the democratic revolution, and defend its gains against reaction, without passing over to launch the socialist revolution.

The method by which he reached this conclusion can be shown by one example, which is directly related to Ghotbi's concept of 'democracy for labour'.

"The proletariat in power cannot but adopt the most energetic measures to solve the question of unemployment, because it is quite obvious that the representatives of the workers in the government cannot reply to the demands of unemployed workers with arguments about the bourgeois character of the revolution.

"But if the government undertakes to maintain the unemployed. . . this would mean an immediate and quite substantial shift of economic power to the side of the proletariat.

"The capitalists, who in their oppression of the workers always relied upon the existence of a reserve army of labour, would feel themselves *economically* powerless while the revolutionary government, at the same time, doomed them to *political* impotence.

"In undertaking the maintenance of the unemployed, the government thereby undertakes the maintenance of strikers. If it does not do *that*, it immediately and irrevocably undermines the basis of its own existence.

"There is nothing left for the capitalists to do then but to resort to the lockout, that is, to close the factories. It is quite clear that the employers can stand the closing down of production much longer than the workers, and therefore there is only one reply that a workers government can give to a general lockout: the expropriation of the factories and the introduction in at least the largest of them of state or communal production." (*Results and Prospects*).

When Lenin presented the *April Theses* in 1917, he had arrived at the same position as Trotsky from a different route.



Before then, a major contradiction had lain unresolved at the base of many of his central political positions. In particular, Lenin's stand on the national question, and his perspective on the struggles for democratic rights in *What is To be Done*, are fundamentally developed from the very theory which he apparently denied.

It is no accident that Ghotbi does not discuss the significance of the October Revolution, for that was the living proof of Trotsky's theory and remains the clearest historical refutation of his own.

The lessons of that experience were carried into the early revolutionary years of the Communist International, where the theory of permanent revolution was assumed as the basis of discussion on how to spread the revolution internationally.

But by focussing his attention on the earlier period, Ghotbi takes no account of any of this. In struggling to avoid the perils of counter-revolutionary Stalinism, he has trapped himself in an ingenious but abstract structure which stands fixed in opposition to the living dynamic of the revolutionary process, with its complex interaction of democratic and socialist tasks.

This is a major and possibly fatal weakness. But it remains of secondary importance to the strength of the book.

For all the determination and heroism they have shown in their long struggles against dictatorship, the workers of Iran have no hope of ending their oppression without the leadership of revolutionary socialists who can intervene as a conscious force in these battles with imperialism.

That leadership itself can never develop if it does not carry into *practice* its theoretical understanding of the historic tasks confronting the proletariat.

Of course that is a very basic lesson, but it is all the more important and urgent because of that. The central argument which Ghotbi tries to drive home in this book is precisely the necessity for Iranian 'Marxists' to make a decisive turn to the working class. That argument is enormously strengthened by his own obvious confidence in the ability of the working class to struggle for the fulfilment of its historic tasks.

Such strengths stand in stark contrast to every variety of sectarianism and opportunism. They represent only beginnings, but without such beginnings no revolutionary leadership can be built in Iran to arm the proletariat politically for its future battles.

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Quite frankly, we're unique!

We're the only movement that fights patiently and relentlessly for the building of a Trotskyist party capable of mobilising the working class in the struggle for state power and the establishment of a socialist society.

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For this reason, though we are smaller than some self-styled 'revolutionary' groups, the WSL has featured in the forefront of

pay struggles in British Leyland, in the fight against the sale of jobs by TUC leaders, in the struggle against the cuts, in unionisation struggles, and in the fight against bureaucratic dictatorship within the unions.

This method of approach—rejecting any descent to simple trade union militancy, and any form of concession to the counter-revolutionary reformist or Stalinist bureaucracy—is of course essential for the working class not only in Britain but *internationally*.

In taking up international issues the WSL points out not only the obligation of British workers to support the Irish liberation struggle and revolutionary struggles such as those in Iran and Southern Africa, but also the necessity for the reconstruction of the Trotskyist Fourth International as the organising centre of the world party of socialist revolution.

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ship is unmistakable.

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MANDEL'S DANCE WITH STALINISM

Tony Richardson reviews Ernest Mandel's collection of essays published by New Left Books under the title *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism*.
(Paperback £2.95)

A comprehensive attack on the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism as the major counter-revolutionary force within the workers' movement is contained in this volume of articles by Ernest Mandel, who goes on to throw into question the very purpose of Trotsky's analysis as a guide to the practical activity of revolutionaries.

Mandel, however, poses as a Trotskyist. He is chief "theoretician" of the 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International. And as such he brings together in this book more than just a series of mistaken positions and interesting errors. The whole collection of articles amounts to a theoretical justification for the opportunist activity of USFI sections in Europe and internationally, whose habitual adaptation to Stalinism has become increasingly open in recent years.

The biggest European section of the USFI, the Spanish LCR, went so far recently as to send a telegram of greetings to a counter-revolutionary gathering of "EuroCommunist" leaders in Barcelona.

If this book is allowed to circulate without a serious response from Trotskyists it will spread nothing but confusion among a layer of people drawn towards the Trotskyist movement. Indeed many workers and youth internationally now recognise that Stalinism is in an acute crisis, and are looking for ways of intervening in that crisis. Mandel's book offers them no perspective other than adaptation to the positions argued by the Stalinists themselves, and must therefore be decisively rejected.

MANDEL'S HISTORY

Of course the positions argued in this latest volume do not come as a bolt from the blue. Mandel has a long political history of attempting to soften and abandon the

Trotskyist conception of Stalinism.

In each of the major crises in the post war Fourth International, Mandel has come forward with an analysis based on no more than the most superficial appearances of the situation, and has *opposed* those who have fought for the necessary political independence of the revolutionary party and of the working class. His role has consistently been that of a reviser of Trotskyist and Marxist theory—whether this be on Stalinism, petty bourgeois nationalism, or the economic crisis of capitalism.

Indeed Mandel himself played a major role in developing the revisionist positions on Stalinism which provoked the 1953 split in the Fourth International.

The developments in the international class struggle in 1953 sharply exposed the way in which the analysis and programme advocated by Fourth International leader Michel Pablo left Trotskyist forces impotent in the face of revolutionary opportunities.

In the Soviet Union Pablo was taken in by the 'left' posturing of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the wake of Stalin's death, and failed to put forward a clear call for political revolution.

In East Germany also, as workers rose up in political struggle against the bureaucracy, to be repressed by Soviet tanks and troops, Pablo and others focussed their attention not on demands to develop the independent struggle of the working class but on the various tactical manoeuvres by the East German bureaucrats.

And in France a massive general strike movement revealed once again the counter-revolutionary perspective and role of the mass French Communist Party at a time when Pablo and Mandel had claimed such parties were likely to be driven by mass pressure to "project a revolu-

tionary orientation".

The liquidationist politics behind such wrong positions were encapsulated in the notorious document *The Rise and Decline of Stalinism* which was published under the name of Michel Pablo and became a major bone of contention in the 1953 split.

But, as Mandel himself pointed out in a letter to George Breitman, "I am the author of the first draft of 'Rise and Decline' " (*Trotskyism v. Revisionism*, Vol. II p.4)

If we leave aside for the moment the way in which that document omits key sentences from its quotes from the Transitional Programme, and the various other detailed points which Mandel later said could be changed in the document, we still find in *The Rise and Decline of Stalinism* a clear advance outline of Mandel's present positions on Stalinism.

The whole document, in seeking progressive elements within the Stalinist apparatus and movements to spontaneous self-reform, is a departure from the insistence by Trotsky on the need for parties of the Fourth International to be built to give conscious leadership to political revolution for the overthrow of the bureaucracy and defence of the nationalised property relations.

Mandel, then as now, places his hopes on automatic developments:

"Malenkov, after 15 years of silence, referred to the activity of "deviationist anti-Leninist" groups in the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, on which the victory of the political revolution depends." (*Rise and Decline* . . . p.15).

Again and again the necessity for conscious, Marxist leadership in the struggle against Stalinism is understated:

"What is new in the situation is that we have reached the stage, forecast in the Transitional Programme, where the 'laws of history' reveal themselves 'stronger than than the bureaucratic apparatus'. Of the two factors determining the orientation of the masses—the death agony of capitalism which unlooses immense revolutionary forces on a world scale, and the policy of the reformist and Stalinist bureaucratic apparatuses which play the role of a brake upon the masses—it is the first which is coming more

and more to the fore. The revolutionary tide which the Soviet bureaucracy is no longer capable of smashing and arresting is even being nourished by certain of the methods of self-defence applied by this bureaucracy, and is preparing the conditions for the overthrow of the bureaucracy by the Soviet proletariat." (p.16).

Developing this revisionist concept of a supposed historical "stage" in which spontaneous struggles outweigh the bureaucratic power of Stalinism and reformism, the document goes on to worship developments in Yugoslavia and China, specifically *opposing* the building of Trotskyist parties and the call for political revolution in these countries (pp.19-20).

It draws from this welter of empiricism and revisionist confusion a general conclusion:

"The system of rigid subordination of the Communist Parties to the political directives of the Kremlin and of the automatic and servile repetition of each successive manifestation of Stalinist revisionism of Marxist-Leninist theory has thus been breached." (p.17).

Hence emerges the even worse statement that:

"The Chinese revolution and the People's Republic of China are today the principal motor force of the colonial revolution, an essential element of the international revolutionary upsurge."

As for the Eastern European Buffer states, the document looks eagerly forward to the possibility of:

"autonomous mass actions transmitting themselves to the native Communist Parties, where there are developing leftist currents capable of giving leadership to the upsurge." (p.21)

In the light of the Hungarian events a mere three years later, these glib forecasts look pretty sick. But they were never corrected.

Equally false were the predictions on developments within the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries:

"These transformations of the CP objectives provoked swings from adventurism to opportunism, and led certain Communist Parties to take directly counter-revolutionary actions at certain periods . . ." (p.21) (emphasis added).

If only "certain" CPs adopted counter-revolutionary



Kremlin tanks in Hungary, 1956.

actions at "certain periods", then the illusion is opened up that the rest of the time the remaining CPs are potentially open to pressure forcing them towards centrist or even *revolutionary* actions.

This position flies in the face of the analysis which formed the basis of Trotsky's decision in 1933 that the Comintern was 'dead for the purpose of revolution', a counter-revolutionary *obstacle* to the struggles of the working class, and that not individual parties, but a whole *international* needed to be built in opposition to Stalinism to offer revolutionary leadership.

But this same position is almost exactly restated in Mandel's book today, in which he peddles the line that the "Eurocommunists" criticise the Soviet bureaucracy as a result of pressure from their working class members.

In 1953 Mandel was arguing that the CPs reflected both the pull of Moscow and the pressure of their militant rank and file, and that therefore:

"they were obliged to reflect, to a certain extent and however inadequately, the interests of the proletariat."

This revisionist line was proved disastrously wrong in 1953 in the French general strike, and has remained wrong ever since. But Mandel's document did not stop there. He goes on to imagine possible wholesale defections of smaller Communist Parties from Stalinism to revolution.

"The crisis in these parties can lead the major part of the communist cadres to come close to the Fourth International and even join its ranks. Thus on condition that the Trotskyist organisations fulfill their task of revolutionary leadership of the masses and adopt a dynamic and flexible attitude toward the communist militants by seeking a common basis in action that would facilitate their transition to Trotskyism."

This approach, translated into the opportunist practice of Pabloism means in effect that the Trotskyists rewrite their programme and adopt their practical work in order to appeal to the Stalinists. The "transition" that takes place is not of Stalinists towards Trotskyism, but of Trotskyist parties into opportunist appendages of the Stalinist parties. This process can be seen at work today in the Spanish section of the 'United' Secretariat, the LCR.

Of the mass CPs, Mandel is even less guarded:

"In countries where the CPs are a majority in the working class they can, in certain exceptional circumstances (advanced disintegration of the possessing classes) and under the pressure of very powerful revolutionary uprisings of the masses, be led to project a revolutionary orientation counter to the Kremlin's directives, without abandoning the political and theoretical baggage inherited from Stalinism." (p.25).

Hence the Mandel-Pablo schema of a revolutionary Stalinist party—which in fact concedes to the Stalinists that in almost every revolutionary ("exceptional") situation the pressure of the masses will force the bureaucracy along the road not of Popular Frontism and counter-revolutionary class collaboration, but revolution.

To spell out his revisionist views, Mandel gleefully describes such developments within the CPs as not the disintegration of Stalinism but a "gradual internal transformation". He declares that it is possible that:

". . . under the pressure of circumstances, they may modify their policies to conform to the interests of the masses". (p.25).

Why, then, build Trotskyist parties at all? This question is not seriously answered in the remainder of the document, which goes on to stress that although Stalinism

can still be counter-revolutionary, "the general direction" is towards liberation from the Kremlin, through which the CPs will be "compelled to strengthen their ties with the masses".

Small wonder, therefore, that in his recent article in *Intercontinental Press* on the 40th Anniversary of the Fourth International, Mandel is forced to an evasive statement which completely falsifies the issues at stake in the 1953 split:

"In fact, none of the international splits was programmatically justified, that is, not one reflected the historically demonstrable fact that one or another current in the Fourth International had crossed class lines or adopted positions that constituted a betrayal of the proletariat."

Of course the Pablo-Mandel current did not *actually* cause the defeat of the working class through their revisionist policy of 1953.

But their disorientation of the Fourth International in the face of Stalinism left the Trotskyist movement impotent in the carrying out of its main task—the building of a revolutionary international which has absorbed the lessons of Trotsky's long battle against Stalinism, and which is capable of offering a clear revolutionary alternative. A Trotskyist movement which cannot analyse or fight Stalinism is as much use as a detergent that cannot dissolve grease. To argue that by rendering the movement impotent Pablo and Mandel did not *actually* go over to the class enemy in no way proves that the 1953 split was unnecessary.

Mandel, who still continues to uphold the self-same method today, is bound to argue now that the split was unwarranted.

OTHER USFI LEADERS

It would be incorrect however, to regard Mandel himself as the sole source of revisionist positions within the leadership of the USFI.

French LCR leader Alain Krivine, for instance, holds equally bankrupt and reactionary positions on Stalinism. He is on record as declaring that in 1956 Khrushchev

"objectively opened the way to destalinisation, a new relationship with the masses".

This concept of seeking out "progressive" sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy and hoping that these forces will somehow "destalinise" the Kremlin regime shows the very essence of USFI revisionism. In reality it constantly seeks shortcuts which will avoid the fight to build independent revolutionary parties based on the Trotskyist programme.

For Trotsky "Stalinism" was the *scientific* term to describe the bureaucratic deformation of the Russian Revolution in the historical difficulties that followed the dislocation of the Civil War. Trotsky saw no answer to this bureaucracy other than *political revolution* carried through by the working class. For Krivine now to suggest that Khrushchev, a leading Stalinist bureaucrat, could "open the way to destalinisation" is no more than a public rejection of the Trotskyist programme.

The latest realignment of factional forces within the USFI has brought political agreement between Mandel and Krivine and their erstwhile "opponents" in the leadership of the US Socialist Workers Party (which is barred from affiliation to the USFI by reactionary US legislation). The result has been the production of more tactfully phrased material which poses as "orthodox" Trotskyism.

But while Mandel, Krivine, and the former "International Majority Tendency" of the USFI trace a direct line

of political descent back to Michel Pablo and the false positions on Stalinism that produced the 1953 split, the SWP has had a more motley history.

Initially in 1953 it acted as the major force breaking from Pablo, and its leaders denounced Pabloism in the most bitter and resounding terms. James P Cannon himself proclaimed that

"We are finished and done with Pablo and Pabloism forever, not only here but on the international field. And nobody is going to take up any of our time with any negotiations about compromise or any nonsense of that sort . . ."

(Speeches to the Party P 176)

But from 1956 onwards the SWP began increasingly to drift towards the superficial analysis and opportunist adaptations of the Pabloite International Secretariat. This political shift brought Cannon and the SWP leaders into growing political conflict with the International Committee which then included the forerunner of the French OCI along with the British Socialist Labour League, and which had been formed in the wake of the 1953 split to provide a focus for the fight against Pablo.

It is indeed significant that one of the most determined efforts by Cannon and the SWP to heal the political breach between themselves and Pablo took place in 1957—on the basis of Pablo's document *Decline and Fall of Stalinism*.

This document failed to draw the slightest lesson from the vicious Stalinist repression of the Hungarian proletariat the year before—and instead talked happily of the Stalinist bureaucracy being forced under pressure of the masses to install 'left' wingers, such as Gomulka in Poland!

The confusion of Cannon and the SWP in 1957 grew only worse in the years up to and during the events of the Cuban revolution and the Cuban missiles crisis—in which Cannon emerged as an open defender of Khrushchev.

Since that point the SWP has played a key role as one of the most "orthodox" sounding advocates of Pabloite politics internationally, prostituting the tremendous legacy of the historical struggle for the Trotskyist movement in the USA to the political defence of a bankrupt, empirical, leadership in the "United" Secretariat and all its most pernicious confusion on the role of post-war Stalinism.

In Britain the clearest example of the abandonment of Trotskyist positions by leaders of the USFI section the International Marxist Group has been the positions taken on the coming demise of the Stalinist *Morning Star*.

Prominent IMG leader Robin Blackburn—famous in the late 1960s for his espousal of "student power" concepts—wrote an article in the *New Statesman* in the week of the Pinochet coup in Chile—September 1973. That coup marked the climax of an historic Stalinist betrayal by the Chilean CP. Yet Blackburn's article says of its sister party, the British CP

"Though the CP is not a new force it is now a more significant one than at any time in the post-war period. In its ranks are some of the best militants in the trade union movement; indeed, under the able and energetic guidance of Bert Ramelson the industrial work of the party has been a major ingredient in the trade union struggles of the last few years".

Not a word of the consistent Stalinist sabotage of strike after strike in Britain. Not a word of the corrupt deals between the CP and top union bureaucracies in which tacit Stalinist support for betrayal after betrayal is exchanged for a few plum full time union jobs for CP

members. There is no hint of Trotskyist sentiment to be found anywhere in Blackburn's summary of the British CP.

Small surprise therefore to find five years later Blackburn, together with fellow student leader Tariq Ali, weeping in *Socialist Challenge* over the financial crisis that now besets the *Morning Star*.

Blackburn asserts that "the disappearance of the *Morning Star* would be a setback for the workers' movement in this country". To describe the *Star* as organising scabbing, says Blackburn, would go down alright in student circles (!) but "would be rejected as absurd by the majority of class conscious militants". He waxes positively enthusiastic:

"The *Star* supported the big struggles against Heath and has supported the big national confrontations against the social contract".

Most of the errors made by the *Star* on the industrial front are similar in that they encourage misconceptions already quite widespread among advanced workers which would have to be reflected in any authentic workers' newspaper". The CPGB, says Blackburn is being forced to re-examine its relationship to Stalinism, its programme for socialism, and its tactics in the class struggle".

The only conclusion the reader can draw from such eyewash is that Trotskyists have only to pressure the CP to correct its unfortunate "errors", which flow apparently *not* from its counter-revolutionary Stalinist tradition and method, but from "misconceptions" widespread among advanced workers. Thus this self-styled 'Trotskyist' effectively blames the *working class* for Stalinist betrayals!

In reality of course the Stalinists of the British CP have played a despicable role in every major struggle—whether it be their support for outright scabbing against the Leyland toolmakers in Spring 1977, their refusal to support the Port Talbot electricians in battle against Phase 2, their contemptible refusal to mobilise support for the Desoutters unionisation struggle, or their refusal to confront the TUC bureaucracy during the Grunwick strike. Never a major battle erupts without workers confronting in practice the treachery of the British CP at some level in the Labour movement.

But in the academic circles in which Blackburn travels and in the editorial offices of *Socialist Challenge*, the 'left' words of the CP can be accepted at face value, and the necessity to retain and develop the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism can be lost sight of.

Tariq Ali joins Blackburn in this stand, also claiming that the *Star* has "supported most strikes" and "contained information", despite following a Stalinist line.

"Despite this crippling defect". Ali tells us, "The CP dailies supported most strikes, contained the only real information regarding industrial struggles and were, for whole period, indispensable reading even for their enemies and political opponents".

Of course the 'defects' included such minor "errors" as supporting the Moscow Trials and the execution of Trotskyists and countless other opponents of Stalin throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s.

The "defects" stretched as far as refusing to print their reports from their own correspondents in Hungary 1956 because those reports actually told the truth. But to ask such questions are of little importance:

"The death of the *Star* would leave us without a paper in which one can occasionally read the views of the stewards engaged in struggles and their calls for nation

solidarity”.

Ali carefully avoids closer examination of these “calls for solidarity”—the monotonous regularity with which they are couched in terms that protect the TUC bureaucracy right and ‘left’ alike; and the consistent inclusion of such reactionary demands as import controls. Only “crazed sectarians”, he says, would welcome its collapse.

Well if hating Stalinism as a pernicious counter-revolutionary cancer on the workers’ movement internationally, and regarding the *Morning Star* as an eruption of that cancer makes us “crazed sectarians”, then we proudly believe we share that category with Leon Trotsky and the followers of the early Fourth International. Trotsky declared in the 1930s—before he himself was savagely murdered by Stalin’s agents—that a “river of blood” separates Bolshevism from Stalinism—and that is even more true in the post war world than it was then. If the IMG and USFI leaders seek to ford that river of blood and join the Stalinist camp, then we will do all in our power to expose their desertion of the Trotskyist principles to which they claim to adhere.

And of course their opportunism towards the Stalinists is not restricted to the *Morning Star* issue. As mouthpieces for the confusing opportunism and superficiality of the ‘United’ Secretariat leaders, and in particular of Ernest Mandel, these British “Euro Trotskyists” declare in *Socialist Challenge* that Stalinist secret policeman Santiago Carrillo has “challenged the theory of socialism in one country,” and “rehabilitated Trotsky”. Carrillo’s book *Eurocommunism and The State* “opens up an important discussion”, they tell us.

Such positions are so obviously derived from elsewhere and empty of independent thought that we must now proceed with our examination of the high priest of ‘Euro Trotskyism’, Ernest Mandel, and his latest literary offering on the question of Stalinism.

ALTHUSSER’S “REMEDY”

Writing on the articles by leading French Stalinist Louis Althusser, published in *Le Monde*, Mandel informs his readers:

“The most remarkable part of Althusser’s articles is that which unmasks and denounces the structure and internal regime of the PCF [French Communist Party]

“There are two sorts of remedies for this disease. The first is developed by Althusser and is of an essentially political nature. It calls for a political theory and practice diametrically opposed to those of the Stalinist and reformist bureaucracies, which are based on distrust and fear of the broad working masses”.

“The second sort of remedy against the bureaucratic disease is more strictly organisational . . . Here Louis Althusser’s approach is very timid to say the least”.

(*Socialist Challenge* 6.7.78)

Mandel would have us believe, then, that Althusser offers a solution of a “political nature” to the PCFs Stalinist regime!

One would scarcely think from this account that Althusser’s articles consistently defend veteran French Stalinist leader Maurice Thorez, who led the CP during the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Indeed Althusser concentrates particular attention on defending the Popular Front policies adopted by the Stalinists in the period 1934-36—and bitterly fought by the Trotskyists both in propaganda and in practice. Trotsky himself wrote articles and whole booklets condemning this reactionary turn by the Stalinists towards so-called “progressive” bourgeois forces, supposed

and attempting to turn towards the independent mobilisation of the working class.

But Althusser—apparently with Mandel’s blessing—argues strongly for “a working class and people’s policy of popular unity” and “a policy of liaison of all working class and popular forces”. Precisely such policies led to the defeat of the Spanish revolution in the 1930s and opened the door to the Pinochet coup in Chile in 1973. Yet Mandel tells us that Althusser offers a “political” answer to French Stalinism!

This one example illustrates the USFI leadership’s whole method of approach to Stalinism and to movements within it: each is dealt with in the most superficial, isolated, a-historical fashion, leading to a complete failure to grasp the pernicious counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism as a material force in the workers’ movement on a world scale.

The Workers Socialist League, differentiating on this issue from each of the main “Trotskyist” currents internationally, struggles to understand historical events and changes in their dialectical development, as processes in motion, and not start from surface appearances. In this way we attempt to apply the method fought for in practice by Trotsky and given theoretical explanation in *In Defence of Marxism*.

We struggle therefore to understand Stalinism both from its own historical development (as a counter-revolutionary reflection of the interests of a conservative bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union) and in the context of the developing crisis of capitalism on a world scale.

Thus the pressures flowing from 1935 turn by the parties of the Communist International towards the Popular Front policy in order to consolidate “peaceful coexistence” between the Soviet Union and capitalism must be seen as the source of many of the apparently contradictory movements within the mass Stalinist Parties today. In drawing the Communist Parties into direct collaboration with sections of their “own” national bourgeoisie, the Popular Front period, followed by “national” governments in the war period and by the class collaboration of capitalist coalition governments in France and Italy in the immediate post-war period, created a dual pressure on the leaders of the mass CPs.

Instead of merely reflecting and transmitting the reactionary foreign policy requirements of Moscow, these bureaucratic leaders had become increasingly responsive to the needs and problems of their “own” bourgeoisie. From components of an international apparatus designed solely to safeguard the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy the Stalinist Party leaders increasingly began to pursue their counter-revolutionary policies on a national level. As the capitalist crisis has weakened the national bourgeoisies in Europe and elsewhere, the open collaboration between the Stalinist parties and this chosen bourgeois allies has increased, and the tendency towards open splits with Moscow—wherever this may further their manoeuvres at home—has also increased.

But Mandel does not seriously regard Stalinism as a material force which is itself the product of material forces, and is unable to grasp the necessary basis for understanding so-called “Eurocommunism”. On Page 14 he declares that the Stalinist “theory” of “socialism in one country” had its “own relatively autonomous dynamic”. In other words, Mandel believes that the idea of ‘socialism in one country’ had a power in itself, separate from the bureaucratic

apparatus of the Comintern.

This is different indeed from Trotsky's insistence on the *inter-connection* between the defeats brought about or worsened by Stalinist misleadership (eg. Germany, China, British General Strike) and the way that these defeats rallied material support to the Stalinists in the battle against Trotskyism. This fight, and that of the Left Opposition and later the Fourth International, was not against the "idea" of 'socialism in one country' but against the growing parasitic bureaucracy whose interests were reflected in that "idea". And it was the very material conditions in 1920s Russia that meant that, for all the correctness of their ideas, the Trotskyists were defeated and the Stalinist bureaucracy established its dictatorial rule over the nationalised property relations established in October 1917.

Mandel goes on to say on Page 14:

"Indeed, the adoption of the theory that it was possible to complete the construction of socialism in one country had deep repercussions which shook the entire international communist movement. That the immense majority of convinced and sincere communist cadres were unaware of this in 1924, 1928 or 1934 is proof of the difficulty for any system of thought, even an analytic instrument such as the Marxist method, immediately to grasp a really radical upheaval in the co-ordinates of its social field".

In amongst the mumbo jumbo of this passage is a clue to Mandel's whole approach to Stalinism. By running together the three dates 1924, 1928 and 1934 he blurs over the very different orientation of the Trotskyist movement in those years.

In both 1924 and 1928 Trotsky and the Left Opposition were fighting both within the Soviet Union and internationally *as a faction of the Comintern*, trying to win over its leading cadres and reform it along revolutionary lines.

But by 1934 Trotsky had drawn the lesson of the catastrophic defeat of the German working class through the ultra-left sectarian line of the Comintern. Stalin's "theory" that the German Social Democrats were in reality "social fascists" led to a fatal split in the powerful German workers' movement in the face of Hitler's drive for power.

The German CP had been the strongest in the world outside the USSR. But its ignominious and total defeat at the hands of fascism, with not so much as a token show of organised resistance, produced not so much as a ripple of concern among the "sincere communist cadres" that Mandel believes were in the Comintern in 1934.

Trotsky and the International Left Opposition drew from this complete failure to respond to the situation the unavoidable conclusion that the Stalinised Comintern had become dead for the purposes of revolution, a *counter-revolutionary force in the workers' movement* that had to be replaced by the construction of parties of the Fourth International in every country to lead the working class to power.

1934 therefore marked the beginning of a fundamentally *different* period for the Trotskyist movement in its struggle against Stalinism. For Mandel, however, the history of Stalinism is not a continuity of development reflecting material and class forces, but a series of particular ideas and events detached from the historical process.

Thus on Page 17 he tells us that Stalinism undergoes "periodic transformation into an instrument of bourgeois

counter-revolution". In other words there must be periods in which Stalinism is *not* an instrument of counter-revolution. If Mandel is right on this, then Trotsky must have been mistaken when in 1933 he definitively pronounced the Comintern "dead for the purposes of revolution". Perhaps all that Trotskyists need to do is to wait for a "period" in which Stalinism plays some sort of progressive role, and then seek means of jollying the process along, in order to turn the CPs back towards revolutionary politics?

Of course there has been no such "period" since 1933. Stalinism was correctly characterised by Trotsky in that period, and retains its *counter-revolutionary* character to this day—even where, as in Vietnam and Angola, Stalinist forces have actually entered battles against imperialism. The disappearance of the popular forces of the NLF in Vietnam under the repression of the Hanoi bureaucracy and the use of Cuban troops to wipe out worker and peasant opposition to the petty bourgeois nationalist Neto regime in Angola shows that Stalinism is opposed, *above all else*, to the independent mobilisation of the working class in every country of the world.

Mandel refuses to accept this. He forgets or brushes aside the river of blood between Stalinism and Trotskyism. He abandons Trotsky's analysis of the Comintern as dead for the purposes of revolution. And he sets aside Trotsky's insistence on the historic mission which falls *exclusively* to the forces of the Fourth International—the construction of revolutionary vanguard parties for the world socialist revolution. For Mandel, the Fourth International is no more than one "current" among many, which has arrived at some correct answers on "questions" of Stalinism:

"The Fourth International has worked for longer on these questions and has reached much more serious Marxist conclusions than any other *current* of the international workers' movement".

Accordingly, Mandel specifically attacks the idea that



Althusser

"Eurocommunism" is a concession by Stalinist bureaucrats to the national bourgeoisie. The emergence of "Euro-Communism" and its condemnation of certain actions by the Soviet bureaucracy, he claims, represents in fact a concession to the working class in order to win votes, arguing:

"It follows that we must regard this aspect of Euro-Communism positively and not negatively"

Mandel regards the "Eurocommunists'" weakness as a failure to go far enough in their criticisms, or to call for workers' councils in the workers' states.

But he fails to point out that *every* criticism of the Stalinist state bureaucracies raised by the "Euro-communists" is entirely compatible with the restoration of *bourgeois* and *not* workers' democracy.

Mandel attempts fraudulently to separate off the completely reactionary domestic policies pursued by the "Eurocommunists" in their own countries, and contrast them with their "progressive" positions on the workers' states.

"When the Eurocommunist leaders commit themselves (insufficiently) against the bureaucracy in this struggle they place themselves on the side of the masses and not on the side of imperialism".

(Page 52)

But these attacks on the Kremlin bureaucracy and the practical support for bourgeois governments in France, Italy and Spain are *both* reflections of the mass Communist Parties drawing in closer to their "own" bourgeoisie and seeking out petty bourgeois "respectability".

To Mandel, however, the Euro-CP criticisms of the internal regime in the Soviet Union

"contribute to the ripening of the political revolution"

(Page 60)

This statement is a complete abandonment of the Trotskyist position. The political revolution which must overthrow the Stalinist clique in Moscow and Eastern Europe can be assisted from outside their borders *only* by the struggle for social revolution in the capitalist countries. Trotsky's whole theoretical analysis of the emergence of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is based on a grasp of the *isolation* of the Russian Revolution, and in particular the failure of the German revolutionary struggles which deprived the new workers' state of the advanced technology needed to eliminate poverty and establish a genuinely planned economy. Had such revolutions taken place, the basis could have been provided for the emergence of a bureaucracy to have been defeated.

But the Eurocommunists' role of *obstructing* the revolution in their own countries, and *protecting* their "own" national bourgeoisie now means that in *material* terms they help perpetuate the isolation of the workers' states and *preserve* the Kremlin bureaucracy. If workers in Eastern Europe do in fact, as Mandel suggests, look to the Euro-CPs for a lead, then they are looking at certain defeat.

Of course there are divisions between sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy internationally on how best to contain the movement of the masses. But, far from making concessions to the demands of the masses, the Euro-CPs have distinguished themselves by drawing ever closer to their "own" ruling class the more militant and powerful the

mass movement becomes. In Spain, Carrillo chose the high point of workers' struggles to sign the reactionary Moncloa Pact: in Italy, Berlinguer maintains the CP as the lynch-pin of the right wing Christian Democratic government, despite a clamour from the ranks of his party for action to defend jobs and wages. The Stalinists certainly *do* respond to the movement of the working class—by seeking the best and quickest means of stifling and gagging that movement before it reaches the level of questioning and jeopardising their privileged bureaucratic positions and collaborationist policies.

OLIVE BRANCH

Mandel however offers these "Eurocommunist" reactionaries a further olive branch by soft-peddling the very nature of the Communist International founded by Lenin. Trotsky, in the formation of the Fourth International, insisted that it based itself squarely on the political legacy of the first four congresses of the Comintern—1919-22. What, then, did the early Comintern represent?

Lenin first called for a new International in his April Theses in 1917, prior to the October Revolution. In the aftermath of the successful revolution, the Bolsheviks pressed ahead with the preparations for the formation of a Communist international as an attractive role for those who were breaking or had broken from social democracy. The fundamental strength of the Bolsheviks and of the Comintern was that Lenin's had been the only whole party of any strength to have opposed the First World War, and upheld this principled position throughout the war period. This strength in turn flowed from Lenin's consistent struggle from 1903 for a disciplined, democratic centralist combat party to lead the working class. This discipline was a central reason for the success of the Bolsheviks in the October revolution. And through the early Comintern the Bolshevik leaders fought for the construction of similar parties on an international level.

For Mandel, however, the key question in his "fraternal" approach to the Stalinists is to reduce Trotskyism, as the continuity of this tradition, to the status of simply another "current" in the workers' movement. To do this, he is forced to go back and minimise the centrality of Lenin's struggle and the Bolshevik Party:

"Lenin was not alone in proclaiming that the Second International was dead and that a Third International would now have to be built, on a much firmer doctrinal and organisational basis. Rosa Luxemburg and a good part of the 'centrist' majority of the Zimmerwald Conference also accepted the idea that 'the International is our only fatherland' and that international discipline should be imposed within the revolutionary workers' movement, at least on major international questions. This concept was not the product of the October Revolution, the predominance acquired by the Bolsheviks with the founding of the Comintern, or of any inclination of Lenin's to extend Russian organisation conceptions, throughout the entire world. It was the common patrimony of all internationalists, whether Bolsheviks or not, from 1915 onwards. It was the nearly unanimous reaction to the catastrophe that struck the bourgeois workers' movements in August 1914".

Here once more Mandel is placing "ideas" above practical action and material reality. Certainly there were

other internationalists in 1914 and after who gallantly opposed social-patriotism and imperialist war. But *they did not lead successful revolutions*, because they had not built Bolshevik-type parties capable of capitalising on the enormous post-war upsurge of the working class throughout Europe. The important issue for Marxists today is not to award posthumous ticks and crosses as to which thinker had the right ideas in 1914, but to assess the practical lessons from the Russian revolution and the defeats throughout the remainder of Europe. Because Lenin and Trotsky understood those lessons, they above all fought for the rapid establishment of a new, democratic centralist, International. The task of the International was to act as the organising centre for the struggle in every country to build parties to lead the overthrow of capitalism.

Only the *Fourth International*, established in the wake of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Comintern, represents today the continuity of that earlier stand by Lenin. The Stalinists—whether “Euro communists” or pro-Moscow hard liners—stand not simply outside but *opposed* to that tradition and legacy, *opposed* to genuine internationalism, and *opposed* in practice to the very notion of international proletarian revolution. Mandel refuses to say this. It might offend the Euro-CPs.

But in attacking the notion that Lenin sought through the Comintern to extend Bolshevik lines of party organisation (“Russian organisational conceptions”), Mandel reveals also the USFI’s contempt for democratic centralism and its deep-rooted federalist concept of an international, in which each individual section or faction is allowed to go its own opportunist way—so long as it does not attempt to examine the historical problems of the post-war Fourth International.

MANDEL APES THE EUROCOMMUNISTS

Of veteran French Stalinist Jean Ellenstein, Mandel writes that “he leaps beyond the criticism of Stalinism that had previously been made” by other CP members. Ellenstein’s contribution, says Mandel, is that he attacks as insufficient the theory of the “cult of personality”.

But what does Ellenstein *really* say? He tells us that the “Stalin phenomenon” is “fading” now that Stalin is dead. He goes on to depict the “Stalin phenomenon” not as the product of material social forces and the reflecting of an emerging bureaucratic caste, but as something peculiarly *Russian*, and linked with the underground work done by the Bolsheviks prior to 1917. The implication is that such a thing couldn’t happen in France.

Pursuing his once stated objective of “rescuing Trotsky from the Trotskyists”, Ellenstein then skilfully selects aspects of Trotsky to defend, admitting that “Trotsky was sometimes a good strategist, he was a great writer and a good orator” (p. 54).

Ellenstein attacks the lack of democracy in Stalinist Russia and attacks the show trials in Moscow and elsewhere—even calling for the rehabilitation of the victims of the Moscow Trials.

But having established these spurious credentials as an ‘objective’ observer and critic of Stalinism, Ellenstein goes on to *defend* Stalin’s line against Trotsky on every key issue of policy.

He specifically defends the notion of “socialism in one

country”—a policy entirely in tune with the French Stalinist party’s policies today. He goes on to defend the Popular Front policy, and, as is fashionable with ‘liberal’ Stalinists, concedes that the fatal ultra-left sectarianism of the “Third Period” in Germany was a mistake. Stalin’s post-war deals with imperialism to divide up the world into arbitrary “spheres of influence” and betray revolutionary struggles in France, Italy and Greece also find a staunch defender in Ellenstein. And Stalin’s over-all record as a “builder of socialism” is defended to the hilt by self-styled ‘dissident’ Ellenstein, who without hesitation trots out this line so characteristic of every Stalinist hack.

The whole picture from Ellenstein’s book is therefore one of a Stalin who has made a few mistakes but was generally correct, though regrettably undemocratic. There is no attempt whatever to show the link between the rigid suppression of democracy in the Soviet Union and the preservation of the bureaucratic privileges of the Kremlin clique headed by Stalin.

This, then, is the “critique” of Stalin held up as good coin by Mandel, and praised as “leaping beyond” previous criticisms by CP members. Mandel’s account merely builds up the credibility of an unrepentant defender of the entire essence of Stalinism. But there is worse to come.

CARRILLO’S “BOMBSHELL”

“Where Ellenstein has fired a shot at the edifice of Stalinist orthodoxy, Carrillo has dropped a bomb” (p. 71).

So says Mandel of the book *Eurocommunism and the State* by Spanish Stalinist chief Santiago Carrillo. That book was reviewed extensively in *Socialist Press* No 85. But Mandel’s position is worthy of note. His criticism centres on the fact that Carrillo doesn’t go far enough. He calls on the USFI rank and file to “centre their criticisms in fraternal discussion with the militants of the ‘advancing wing’ of Eurocommunism”.

Despite his subsequent talk of attacking the reformism of the Euro-CPs, Mandel’s notion of “fraternal criticism” can do nothing but disarm USFI members in the face of Stalinism. In suggesting that Carrillo’s politics have a “progressive side” he is opening the door for complete capitulation to the reactionary forces of the Spanish CP.

Carrillo’s failure to ‘go far enough’ in criticising the USSR is regarded as a ‘contradiction’ which can apparently be resolved by Stalinist militants, *not* through a thoroughgoing practical *break with* the Spanish CP, but through discussion of *ideas* while remaining within that party:

“But while these contradictions cannot be overcome by the Eurocommunist leaders, they can be overcome by the militants of these parties. It is towards these militants that we must now turn for our increasingly promising dialogue. Carrillo’s book offers every revolutionary powerful ammunition [!] in this regard” (p. 86).

Far from exposing the counter-revolutionary treachery of the Moncloa Pact and the practical betrayals perpetrated by the Stalinist leaders, Mandel actually claims that the strategy of the Euro CPs:

“acquires all its credibility in the eyes of the masses in precisely the phase in which the exacerbation of contradictions, tension, and class struggles inexorably places a frontal test of strength between capital and labour on the agenda” (p. 196).

To suggest that the Stalinists’ betrayals carry most credibility in a time of mass struggles is effectively to

renounce any prospect of exposing and destroying these leaders. Instead of the Trotskyist approach, which sees the masses confronting *in practice* the class collaboration of their mass leaders, and the necessity of constructing an independent revolutionary party to offer the masses a clear programme and an alternative leadership, Mandel reduces the whole process to a "fraternal" debate on abstract ideas between different "currents" in the workers' movement.

Rather than issue a Trotskyist rallying-cry to destroy Stalinism—whether in its "Euro", Moscow or Peking varieties—Mandel offers the illusory hope that certain wings of the Stalinist bureaucracy can, under the influence of a "dialogue" evolve of their own volition towards revolutionary politics. It is unclear whether or not Mandel includes Santiago Carrillo himself in this category.

But one thing is becoming clear to increasing numbers of Spanish workers, if not to Ernest Mandel: the only bomb that Carrillo is likely to drop is on the *working class* as he lines up openly with the Francoist Suarez regime in defence of Spanish capitalism!

BAHRO

An important chapter of Mandel's book deals with East German dissident Rudolph Bahro.

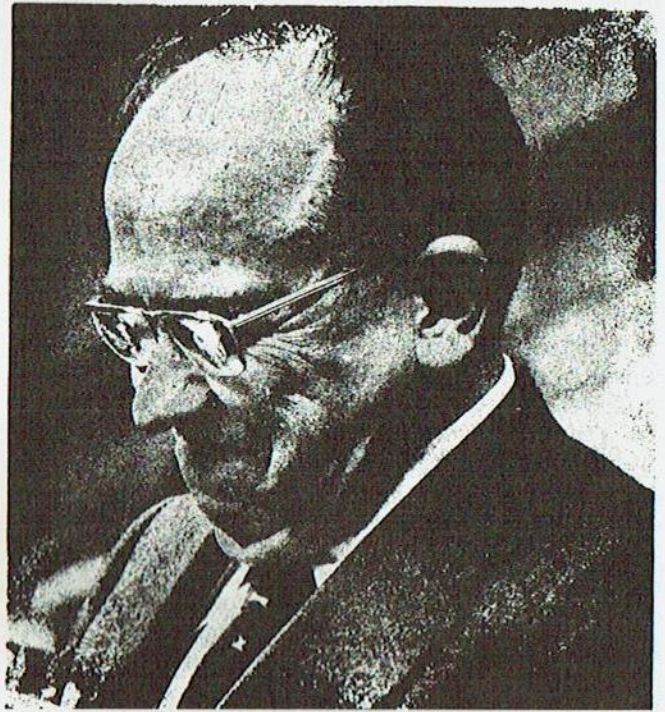
The conditions for political revolution are clearly developing inside Russia and Eastern Europe. The open splits between rival national Stalinist bureaucrats in Eastern Europe show the weakness of the bureaucracy, as each section seeks to protect its own interests and defend itself against its own working class.

Most important of all, the productive forces creating material development in the deformed workers' states also create greater inequality and thus greater conflict between the masses and the parasitic bureaucracy. This emerged graphically a short time ago in Poland. The general instability of the bureaucracy has been proven historically in the East German uprising of 1953 and the 1956 rising in Hungary, as well as the hasty moves by the Kremlin to repress the Czech workers in 1968.

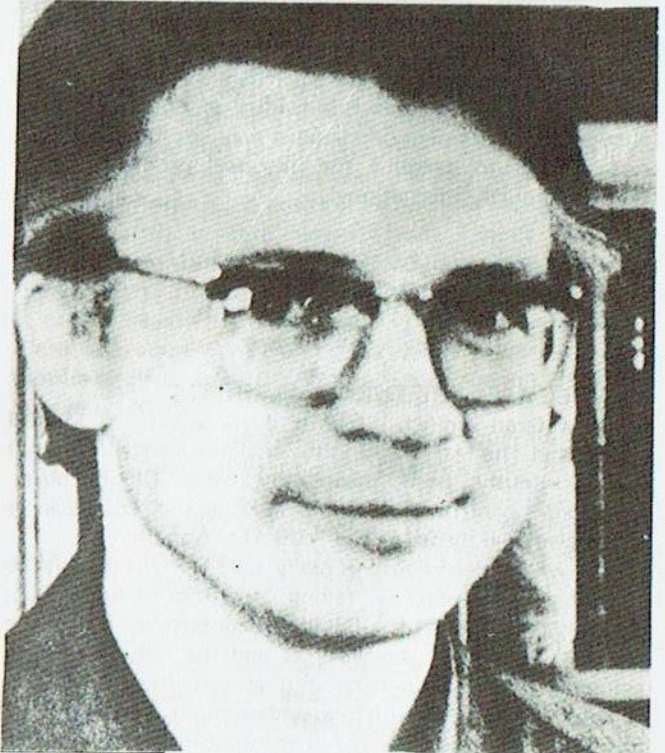
As the Stalinist bureaucracy—rejecting any development of workers' management of the nationalised economy and unable therefore to utilise the full creative potential of centralised planning—instead seeks increased deals, loans and agreements with the West, so its economy becomes increasingly affected by the crisis of capitalism. This can be seen clearly in the case of Yugoslavia.

As a result, the Stalinist bureaucracies are now also driven to seek ways of increasing productivity—forcing the workers to work harder.

It is this conflict between the masses and their bureaucratic leaders which must be the starting point for a communist opposition. Under these conditions, Trotskyist parties must be built inside the workers' states to create the conscious force fighting to mobilise the working class in a *political revolution* to displace the bureaucracy and reestablish the political power of the working class over the nationalised economy established in the October Revolution. The East German strikes of 1953, the workers' councils and militia created in the Hungarian events of 1956, the movement in the factories in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the subsequent struggles in Poland have all confirmed that, however heroic may be the opposition movements of intellectuals and occasional disaffected bureaucrats, the key to political revolution is the indepen-



Carrillo



Rudolph Bahro

dent strength of the working class.

It is from this standpoint that we must look at the wide variety of oppositional currents that have developed inside the workers' states. They range from outright agents of imperialism (often driven to this position through bureaucratic repression) to communists seeking the path back to Lenin.

A whole section of these oppositionists look to Carter's reactionary "human rights" charade, and most seek in some way to mobilise bourgeois public opinion in the capitalist states against the abuses carried out by the Stalinist regimes.

Bahro's strength is that he does not seek such a way out. But he represents a confused section of the intelligentsia,

frustrated with the way that the working class in the workers' states appears to have been bought off by the manoeuvres of the bureaucracy—especially in Poland, where the various strike waves have each brought token economic "concessions" from the bureaucracy.

Mandel, however, praises Bahro's book (*Die Alternative*) to the skies:

"The Alternative is the most important theoretical work to come out of the countries that have abolished capitalism since Leon Trotsky's Revolution Betrayed. . . it is a source of elation that the German Marxist theoretical tradition is being reborn in East Germany."

In this way Trotsky's greatest and most decisive book, written as a part of the conscious struggle against Stalinism and for the development of revolutionary parties, is reduced to the level of being branded as simply a theoretical "work", and actually compared to the confused efforts of an individual oppositionist to understand bureaucracy. Mandel in this way demonstrates the casual way in which ideas can be bandied about by USFI leaders once they are shorn of their material context and significance.

What does Bahro really have to say?

His *strength* is that in denouncing what he calls "actually existing socialism" he declares that the only alternative is a socialist, or communist system. And he attacks the idea that the bureaucracy can reform itself. He calls for an upper limit on wages and for an end to privileges and decorations.

These strengths are obviously the reason why Bahro has recently been sentenced to 18 months in prison in East Germany. We must salute his courage in taking such a stand, and oppose such repression. But this does not oblige us to accept everything put forward in his book. In particular any serious efforts to support or defend Bahro demand the development of a movement to overthrow the bureaucracy.

It is in this respect that Bahro's book has nothing to offer. Indeed his confusion and misdirection could even act as an obstacle to the development of revolutionary forces.

Firstly, Bahro specifically *attacks* the idea that the working class is the key to the overthrow of the bureaucracy. Since 1914, he says, the European working class has only fought for trade union demands and immediate material gains. And this cynicism towards the working class links in with his complete acceptance of the "inevitability" of bureaucracy in Russia in the 1930s because of the lack of developed productive forces. A similar lack of productive forces would, he suggests, mean that bureaucratic regimes in Africa and Asia today would be acceptable. So much for his "resolute internationalism", as praised by Mandel!

Bahro's indifference to the working class means that historically he fails to mention Hungary 1956 and turns instead to the Czech events of 1968, where the Dubcek bureaucracy clashed with Moscow.

Change, he says, should take place through the "broad educational movement" of a "League of Communists". This "League" would not be a democratic centralist organisation, nor would it agitate for the armed overthrow of the bureaucracy and establishment of workers' councils; although occasionally using the term 'political revolution', Bahro in most instances describes his idea of such change as "a cultural revolution, essentially non-violent".

The force behind such a change is to be the prosperous petty bourgeois intellectual layers in the Stalinist states who he calls on to engage in "a collective renunciation of a continued material expansion". Such social layers overlap

extensively with the state bureaucracy itself, and Bahro is careful to avoid any undue stress on the conflict between the working class and its parasitic rulers:

"Yet it is not the contradiction between the people and the functionaries, or, more accurately, between the masses and the apparatus, which one can establish by analysis, that gives us our basis of hope."

For Bahro, the solution to the problem of bureaucracy lies in what he calls *surplus consciousness*—something outside the production process altogether. He calls for more university education. And this surplus consciousness he imagines coming into conflict with the bureaucracy.

No wonder Mandel's mouth waters at this kind of material. It is little different from his old discredited ideas about "student power" in the later 1960s. Mandel himself declared that the working class in the capitalist countries had been bought off by cars and refrigerators, and that *students* would therefore be the source or "vanguard" of the revolution.

Such approaches are and always have been entirely idealist. Because it appears that intellectuals are the main opposition forces at a particular point of time, non-Marxists attempt to "explain" this by inventing theories of "surplus consciousness" or theories as to why the working class is "backward". But in reality, intellectuals *reflect* a developing movement in the working class. They are a useful barometer but not in themselves a storm.

Similarly Bahro himself is important in that he must reflect a growing unease among the masses in Eastern Europe. Though he cannot understand this himself, the East German bureaucracy must clearly recognise in Bahro's confused writings a warning that they will shortly have to contend with the masses. This has driven them to the lengths of punitive action against Bahro in order if possible to intimidate further opponents.

The same pressures and forces clearly underly the recent Soviet show trials and the handing out of draconian penalties against almost insignificant petty bourgeois opponents.

If Bahro has no programme to offer the workers in the workers' states, does he at least show sympathy towards Trotsky and the struggle of the Left Opposition against the growing power of Stalinism? No! He goes out of his way to *attack* them:

"We must, of course, free ourselves from the old orthodox Marxist sectarianism. We cannot learn the path to follow from that opposition which lost the fight against the rise of Stalinism. Every revolutionary communist since 1917 has had Trotskyist feelings at a certain stage in the move away from domination by the apparatus. But this position really does lack historical prospects."

So this is the real content of what Mandel calls the greatest "theoretical work" since *Revolution Betrayed*! That book Trotsky himself described as a "basis for action". It included the following crystal-clear explanation of the material forces that will emerge as the focus for political revolution:

"A raising of the productivity of labour on the basis of commodity circulation, means at the same time a growth of inequality. The rise in the prosperity of the commanding strata is beginning to exceed by far the rise in the standard of living of the masses. Along with an increase of state wealth goes a process of new social differentiation".

(P115 *Revolution Betrayed*)

Mandel of course pays scant attention to material forces, or to practical action. Instead he continues his

frantic search through the various "works" and confused ramblings of the oppositionists to search for ready-made answers that he hoped may offer a short-cut that avoids the hard, patient struggle for the building of Trotskyist parties in Eastern Europe.

Trotsky says in the *Transitional Programme*:

"There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection—the party of the Fourth International".

"The whole programme for the USSR is based on the workers, rank and file collective farmers, peasants and Red Army men".

The clarity of this programme is in that it is a policy for action to drive the bureaucracy and the new meritocracy out of the soviets." He calls for the "regeneration and development of Soviet democracy" the "legalisation of soviet parties" and to return to the soviets their "class content".

This section winds up with three slogans:

Down with the bureaucratic gang of Cain-Stalin!

Long live Soviet democracy! (notice Soviets as class organs)

Long live the international socialist revolution!

Internationalism for Trotsky means support for world revolution *not* adaptation to the counter-revolutionary Euro-CPs, or to oppositional intellectuals in the Soviet Union.

We say the greatest "work" towards development of the political revolution in Russia and Eastern Europe was the 1956 Hungarian uprising because it showed—in the way that the 1905 revolution showed Lenin the form of the 1917 revolution—the form which the power of the working class will take in its rise against bureaucracy.

It showed the worker councils and militia: it showed the ending of the secret police. Its failure came precisely because there weren't developed Trotskyist parties in Hungary, Poland and in Russia to take this forward.

RECONSTRUCT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL !

Ever since the decision to form the Fourth International, centrists have insisted that Stalinism has *not* finally gone over to counter-revolution. The British ILP held this position, and was therefore unable to fight Stalinism. Isaac Deutscher in his biography of Trotsky declares that the formation of the Fourth International was a wrong step, and as a delegate from the Polish Trotskyists cast the only vote against the foundation of the new International at the 1938 conference.

While Mandel would disagree verbally with all such forces, the *essence* of his approach is also to seek out 'progressive' forces within Stalinism who can be won through "fraternal" debate to the correct "ideas" of the Trotskyist movement.

Thus, in the capitalist states of Europe, the turn by Mandel and the USFI to the "progressive side" of the "Eurocommunist" parties comes at a time of the Stalinists' most brazen class collaboration with their "own" capitalist class.

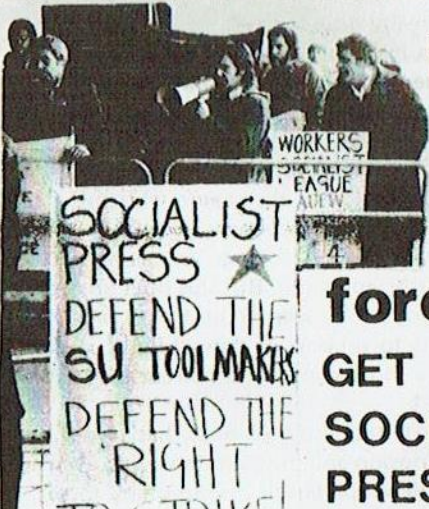
In the workers' states Mandel puts the confusion of an isolated oppositionist on a par with Trotsky's definitive writings on the nature of the Soviet Union.

Such opportunist positions will not attract serious class fighters to Trotskyism—it will drive them away. The most advanced layers of the Spanish masses will not be easily convinced that the same Carrillo who sells out their every struggle to the Francoist regime is 'progressive' because he

simultaneously criticises aspects of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. And workers in Eastern Europe who look to Trotskyism for a perspective in their struggle against the bureaucracy will recoil in disgust from Bahro's idealist theories, which have no room for the working class and which focus exclusively on the mental activity of petty bourgeois intellectuals.

In fighting the counter-revolutionary policies of both the pro Moscow and the "Euro" CPs, and for the destruction of Stalinism as an organised obstacle to proletarian revolution, Trotskyists must also enter the struggle against the revisionist perspectives of Ernest Mandel and the opportunist practice of the 'United' Secretariat of the Fourth International of which his book on Stalinism is a reflection.

Only through such a fight to reassert the method, principles and programme of the Fourth International and to reconstruct it as the World Party of Socialist Revolution can the best elements of the working class be won to the banner of Trotskyism and led on the road of emancipation from the rule of decaying capitalism and parasitic Stalinism.



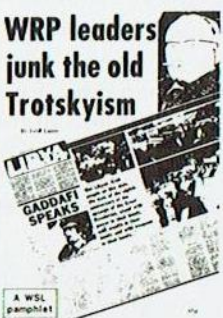
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Forty years on: a look at the practice of the US SWP

KEITH WHITE uses the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the American SWP last year to look a little closer at that Party's current 'turn' into the trade unions, and the programme on which this 'turn' is based.

Founded 40 years ago in 1938 and with its paper *The Militant* celebrating its 50th anniversary, the American Socialist Workers Party is one of the most important organisations calling itself Trotskyist in the world today.

Despite being prevented through reactionary US legislation since 1940, from being actually affiliated to any international movement, it has retained a great authority amongst those calling themselves Trotskyists and has been at the centre of most of the important developments within the Trotskyist movement internationally.

Thus in 1953 it was the SWP which took the initiative of issuing the "Open Letter to Trotskyists" which provided a rallying point for those working to defend 'orthodox' Trotskyism against the revisionism of Michel Pablo and his side-kick Ernest Mandel.

It was, however, also the SWP which led the majority of the International Committee back into political alliance with the Pabloites in 1963.

Unable to probe the real roots of the post-war crisis of Trotskyism and return to the method of the Transitional Programme, the SWP steadily capitulated to the Pabloites. With the emergence of the Cuban revolution the SWP was in the forefront of hailing Castro as an 'unconscious Trotskyist' and capitulation to his petty-bourgeois nationalism. Even today the SWP laud Castro's counter-revolutionary role in Africa as "a decisiveness and revolutionary courage that we haven't seen since the early days of the Bolshevik revolution". (*Militant* 15.9.78)

The 1963 "reunification" was cemented with a ten year moratorium which outlawed discussion on any of the questions which had split the world movement in 1953.

This cement however did not prevent the issues from raising their heads within the newly formed 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International' and, by 1969, the

SWP was in a minority over the question of guerilla warfare in Latin America.

The positions hardened and the SWP formed the Leninist Trotskyist Faction in the build-up to the 1974 USFI World Congress. This time the minority position received only a handful fewer votes than Mandel's majority.

Time, and the logic of the majority's lunatic positions on Latin America have substantially changed the balance of forces within the USFI.

Today the SWP can claim that its ideas are now dominant within that formation.

The SWP is no longer regarded as the "defender of reformism" within the USFI but is surprisingly seen as the "mature defender of orthodoxy", the organisation which has been "correct all along" on the disastrous guerrillaism of Mandel, Maitan and Frank. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

In the IMG, British Section of the USFI, the SWP's supporters have emerged, from years of isolation, as no longer the objects of undisguised contempt but more integrated than ever—and more influential.

The purpose of this article is not, therefore, an academic examination of the history of the SWP. It is the *beginning* of an attempt to examine the politics of one of the most important organisations in the world. If the SWP had fought a battle to defend orthodoxy against Mandel then the present dominance of the SWP would have served as a massive step forward for the Fourth International, the world movement with the task of resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership.

Elsewhere (*Trotskyism Today* no 3) we have examined

the role of the SWP in the faction fights which have wracked the world movement over the last 30 years. In our document *"The Poisoned Well"* we outline the continued refusal of the SWP to return to the real issues posed before us today—the application of the method of the transitional programme, as contrasted with the method of pablistism.

In this article we will deepen our critique of the *practice* of the SWP, which was begun in our brief analysis of the US Miners' strike published earlier this year in *Socialist Press* (Nos 113&114).

Our contention is that the SWP's "orthodoxy" is a sham. For the SWP has *abandoned* the task of providing revolutionary leadership and replaced this with an opportunist relationship with the trade union bureaucracy.

This opportunism was clearly displayed throughout the miners strike and a recent turn by the SWP will no doubt provide us with many other examples in the future.

The September 15th 1978 issue of *The Militant* carries an article by Jack Barnes (who we understand is now no longer referred to by Mandel's supporters as "the one-armed bandit") entitled "For a Fighting Democratic Labor Movement".

Referring to the recently adopted USFI resolution "The World Political Situation and the Tasks of the Fourth International" Barnes says:

"The resolution states that new and unprecedented opportunities have opened up for winning industrial workers to the sections of the Fourth International . .

To take advantage of this situation and meet this challenge, special efforts are necessary, including the mobilisation of members won previously among other social layers. The resolution points out that these comrades have not yet become part of the industrial working class and its unions and that they should do so without further delay . . . What is needed is a conscious decision to carry through a complete reorientation of the jobs, political activity and lives of thousands and thousands of comrades".

(Our emphasis)

Barnes is clear that:

"Simply sending the majority of our present cadres into industry and into the industrial unions is not in and of itself the solution to building a mass revolutionary party of workers. . . (but a) tactic to facilitate building such a party, nothing more".

In principle there is nothing wrong in adopting a tactic such as this. We in the WSL do not think, however, that such a turn is necessary in order to train non-industrial cadres as Bolsheviks. The key emphasis should be placed on the correct method of approach to the winning and training of new cadres drawn *from* the industrial working class. The most important question is what you *do* when you *have* forces in the industrial unions!

The mass of SWP members are outside the industrial unions for a very good reason—the SWP for decades abandoned a working class orientation in favour of a central emphasis on the radicalising petty-bourgeois milieu on the campuses. In the anti-war movement and the struggle against women's oppression the orientation was to the middle class. And in these struggles as in their approach to the question of women's rights, black Chicano oppression, the SWP adapted its *programme* to avoid the slightest conflict with the forces among whom it was working.

We are preparing a detailed critique of the SWP's

activity within the movement against the Vietnam war. But in relation to nationalism and women's oppression we can make some brief points.

The current SWP edition of the transitional programme includes "a programme for black liberation". The programme correctly points to the fact that a prerequisite for the liberation of blacks is socialist revolution. However a key point made by the SWP in the programme is the need *not* for a cross-race *proletarian* revolutionary party but for a Black Party!

The SWP's view that Castro's consistent nationalism amounted to Trotskyism has been transferred to black nationalism. As a result the SWP's whole emphasis on black liberation has been to fight for *democratic* demands, centred around the inoperable slogan of "self-determination", topped off with a call for a black party.

In the busing struggle for example the SWP limited its intervention to being simply the best builders of support for that struggle. There was no attempt to put forward alongside the busing call a socialist programme which answered the real problem: the need for expanded education facilities for all, black and white.

Much of the SWP's activity over the past decade has been around the petty-bourgeois women's liberation movement.

In Britain the SWP's supporters in the IMG and the League for Socialist Action have been at the head of those who have argued for restricting the abortion rights movement to a "single-issue campaign". Attempts to link this struggle directly to a struggle against the cuts in the health services are regarded as "sectarian" by these people.

In the USA, too, the SWP has seen itself as organiser of the single issue democratic demand movements.

At present this means broad-based campaigns uncritically supporting the Equal Rights Amendment. When the SWP "turns to the unions" it is simply finding another arena for this same wretched programme. Little emphasis is placed on the ways in which the emergence of struggles by women workers begin to pose confrontation with their oppression. Women in short, are approached *simply* as women and not as part of the working class as a whole, with a vital role to play in every aspect of its struggles.

The attitude of the SWP to the struggle to defend jobs and living standards parallels the opportunist attitude to black nationalism and feminism. But in this case the adaptation is to the trade union bureaucrats—and not only those of the left talking kind.

The WSL has from the first issue of *Socialist Press* subjected the trade union and labour bureaucrats to merciless attention and criticism. Throughout our history we have sought to bring to the attention of the workers all the twists and turns, the lies and tricks these people practise in their daily betrayal of our class.

Why do we do this? Is it because we are bitter side-line sectarians who believe that simple denunciations and insults are enough to destroy these traitors? No. It is because the building of a revolutionary party depends on the training of workers in an understanding of the role of those people.

But more than an understanding is required. Those who come forward to form the core of the revolutionary party must be able to confront and defeat the present trade union and labour leaders in the nitty gritty of the class struggle. They must be trained to fight for the removal of the traitors and their replacement.

Barnes' article has next to nothing to say about the trade union leaders other than general truths about their inadequacy. Nowhere will you find even an example of the shifts and manoeuvres these people get up to. Now Barnes could argue that his article was not necessarily the place for analysis. But the fact of the matter is—as we shall see below—that such material as this *never* features prominently in the pages of *Militant*.

The WSL does not in any way restrict itself to the propaganda work of literary and verbal denunciations. Alongside this necessary part of mobilising workers against the present leaders goes the physical mobilisation of workers *in struggle*. In countless instances the WSL has led workers in struggle around partial and transitional demands. We present our programme in neither an opportunist nor a sectarian fashion and within the WSL we have fought both these tendencies. A central part of our fight to expose and ultimately remove the misleaders of our class is the tactic of placing demands upon them. Where they take up a partial struggle we support them wholeheartedly and ask them to go further. When they refuse to wage any real struggle, they stand exposed in the face of their supporters.

In his article, quoted above, Barnes lays out the SWP's approach:

'We should always remember, when we think about our strategy inside the labour movement that we talk to three different audiences.

One we talk to the working class as a whole. We have to explain to workers 'You must govern. You must govern this country. Because those who currently govern it are your enemies and are running everything into the ground. You must form a workers' government'. That's the goal of the working class as a whole.

Two we talk to the labour movement, a smaller but organised and more conscious audience. We say some additional things to the labour movement. It must defend itself against the attacks that are coming. To do this the labour movement must be transformed. It must become a social movement using union power to fight for its own interests and for the interests of all the exploited and oppressed. It must end its collaboration with the enemy class, which has nothing in store for it but attacks, or it cannot repel the attacks.

Thirdly, we talk to radical minded workers, the radical-minded individuals, those who consider themselves socialists or political radicals. To them we explain over and over again that the key to everything is to build a revolutionary socialist party that can organise and lead to a successful conclusion the massive class.

This is where our fight to build a class struggle left-wing of the labour movement comes in. This orientation is stressed in the world political resolution and is key to our work in many countries. It is certainly key for us. . .

A class struggle left-wing will be much, much bigger than the SWP, its friends and those who work with us. It will be a mass formation of those who more and more will be ready to use class-struggle methods instead of relying on the class collaborationism of the bureaucracy. It must be an organised formation *but around a class-struggle programme* . . .

Today millions of workers are beginning to look for a perspective, for a program into this, even if they haven't yet thought it out. We begin to see such workers in the supporters of the Steelworkers fight back campaign, in the long strike on the Mesabi Iron Range, in the coal miners strike . . . Our job is to give a *program* and a *perspective* to these millions of workers looking for a new, militant

union movement. *We want to emulate what the revolutionary leaders of the Teamsters did in the mid 1930s.*

(Our emphasis)

The SWP had the chance in the US miners' strike to prove its revolutionary credentials. It failed. But in failing, it also gave an insight into the real content of Barnes' concept of a so-called "class struggle left wing", which is, in essence, little different from the notorious old Pablo/Mandel notion of a "new mass vanguard".

Throughout the miners' strike the SWP newspaper *The Militant* gave extensive coverage offering a detailed picture of the strategy and tactics that party pursued.

A study of their record in the strike shows that the SWP was totally incapable of posing the real issues and giving the necessary revolutionary line for the UMWA.

The tone for the SWP's intervention into the strike was set by the December 16 issue headline "Support Coal Miners Strike".

Between then and the end of the dispute, the central theme of the SWP was 'solidarity'. Despite the fact that many thousands of words were written giving 'he details of the attack on the UMWA and battles being fought out by the miners, *The Militant* appeared throughout as a paper giving no more than a commentary from a socialist viewpoint.

To be sure the SWP were not passive in the face of the strike. It is clear that the membership acted in line with the February 22 Political Committee statement which gave the SWP's top priorities as follows:

- *To expose the lies and divisive tactics of the energy corporations.

- *To help mobilise the broadest possible support for the miners.

- *To draw the lessons of this battle for working people.

Within the strike itself the SWP at least in words stressed the centrality of the gains in union democracy coming from the 1972 victory of Miller's Miners for Democracy and the need to extend these gains, to direct them towards class independence, defence of conditions and, from time to time, talked of the need for a Labor Party.

In *practice*, however, the SWP concentrated on the support element in the strike—setting up support committees, organising rallies and collecting money. The sharp political edge in the struggle—that between the rank and file miners and the Miller leadership—was reported in general terms.

In *no way* did the SWP emphasise the treacherous role of Miller or find ways of developing the struggle against him. A diligent search of the pages of *The Militant* during the 110-day strike reveals a consistent avoidance of the question of blacking action by supporters of the strike.

Nowhere did the SWP argue for this demand. This is shown starkly in one article, "Why the mine workers need a Labor Party" (*Militant*, 3 March 1978) where the SWP declared:

"Labor Party representatives in Congress and in the state legislatures would . . . vote against any and all measures to move scab coal."

But in the *same* issue of the paper, in an article entitled "How not to support the strike", the SWP makes no call to campaign for the blacking demand and gives the impression of opposition.

Attacking the sectarian Spartacist League, the SWP says:

"The Spartacist League, another sectarian outfit with

Trotskyist pretensions 'supports' the miners by introducing union resolutions calling on workers to 'hot cargo' (boycott) scab coal and demand that the steelworkers immediately go out on strike too".

The author, Shelley Kramer, goes on to attack the idea that sympathy strikes are *the* central focus for solidarity, putting forward, as an alternative, "support activities that can make headway". But conspicuously absent from the SWP's suggested list is any mention of blacking scab coal.

We can only conclude that the SWP did not regard the fight for blacking to be central to the miners' strike. Yet in this strike the production and shipment of scab coal was an important weapon in the hands of the employers. Further evidence of the SWP's solidarity actions can be seen within the San Francisco 'Miners Strike Labor-Community Support Coalition'.

Despite the fact that a resolution was passed calling for blacking of coal shipments within the area and the SWP did not oppose this resolution, the publicly issued leaflets of the Coalition *did not mention* this important demand.

And the SWP voted *against* resolutions from union locals in the San Francisco area for sympathy strikes in support of the miners.



Socialist Press called for the preparation of a general strike if Carter implemented the anti-union Taft-Hartley legislation against the miners. The SWP, however, again restricted its call to further protest rallies by those supporting the miners. Nowhere did the SWP advocate the preparation of strike action, restricting itself to historical articles about the great struggles against Taft-Harley in the late 1940s.

In *The Militant* (June 23), the SWP attempted to answer the sectarianism of the Spartacist League and the Healyite Workers League on the tasks of revolutionaries in the miners' strike. In this article and in the April 28 supplement, 'The Meaning of the Miners' Strike', those who want to study the real face of the SWP's "turn to the unions" will find the necessary information.

We have already drawn attention to the fact that the essence of the SWP's intervention was to build trade union solidarity with the miners. The implementation of this line was carried out in such a way as to avoid head on conflict with Miller. After the strike was over, the major article 'The Meaning of the Miners' Strike' had this to say about the question of leadership:

"The reform leadership was swept into office by the mass upsurge in the coalfields. But the new officers—and many of those who elected them—did not realise that it would take a continuing mobilisation of the ranks to

strengthen and transform the UMWA."

Nowhere is there any direct attack on Miller and co.—simply descriptions of their shortcomings, despite the movement that had arisen demanding their removal!

The SWP in reality see the question of a new leadership in terms of simply the *organisation* of the rank and file on a class struggle programme. But they are silent in the face of petitions signed by thousands of miners correctly demanding Miller's resignation. What is the SWP's attitude to this? Should miners have signed such a petition?

In our opinion, it was precisely such moves that offered the best openings for revolutionary work in the UMW. And while in our opinion a call for a "special conference" to dump Miller would have been a diversion during the strike, we think that a central focus *should* have been made on the removal of Miller's authority to run the strike, through the building of strike committees. For example, Miners' Safety Committees could have taken responsibility for running the strike. The SWP avoided all these questions.

Instead, in 'The Meaning of the Miners' Strike', the SWP outlines "a strategy to fight back". Here, they describe the attacks now being launched on workers by employers throughout the USA. The SWP's answer to these attacks is to combine demands for union democracy with the call for a Labor Party.

"A Labor Party would... fight to open the books of the banks and corporations... with access to all the financial and technical information kept secret by the bosses, the workers themselves could take control of the production process..."

"The current chaos of contrived shortages, unexpected gluts, business crisis, and inflation could be replaced with democratic planning of production to meet human needs. These far-reaching tasks can be carried out only by the power of the government..."

"Formation of an independent labor party would be a giant step toward abolishing the rule of a wealthy minority and bringing to power a truly democratic government—a workers' government."

Two points can be made on this. The test of this line and whether it is to be implemented in a reformist or revolutionary way will be to see whether the SWP now begins to fight *in practice* for the organisation of elected workers' committees within the mines, within the steel plants and factories to fight for the open the books demand.

Secondly, while the SWP has placed increasing verbal emphasis on the demand for a Labor Party, this has remained on an abstract, propaganda level.

The SWP continues to stand its own candidates in elections and has not begun the practical fight now by fighting for the construction of labour slates in elections.

In many ways the coverage given by *The Militant* was very informative. Articles on who owns the mines, the effects of the employers' profits drive, the dangers of arbitration, the historical fights in the miners' union, were all important background material for those who wanted to counter the lies of the employers and the government. At each stage of the fight the proposed contracts were examined in detail, showing the extent of the "give-back" demands of the employers.

However, at no point did the SWP headline their paper, carry an article or even spell out a sentence calling clearly for miners to *reject* each contract! To do this would have meant conflicting with the 'left' trade union bureaucracy. As we shall see below, the SWP prefer to fight for a strategy of "outflanking" rather than confronting the misleaders.

The "class-struggle left-wing" concept, despite talk of programme, should be seen for what it is—an attempt to make common cause with the left and not-so-left union bureaucrats. To campaign directly for rejection of a contract, to fight for blacking or strike committees would have brought SWP "Trotskyists" into conflict with the money-collecting bureaucrats.

The SWP not only avoided but clearly had no conception of how to take up the sharp edge in the miners' strike—the fight to construct new leadership through the building of a revolutionary cadre and the struggle to mobilise workers to remove their existing bureaucratic leaders. But the attitude to Miller was not surprising considering the slavish support given to him by the SWP in the years before.

Miller was elected President of the UMWA in 1972. As the increasingly corrupt Boyle leadership began to lose control of the rank and file a reform movement was launched by union bureaucrat Joseph Yablonski. Yablonski quickly became a focus for militants within the union.

In 1969, Boyle defeated Yablonski in the election for President. Shortly after this, Yablonski and several members of his family were murdered. The election was widely suspected of being rigged and several years later Boyle was indicted for the murders. "Miners for Democracy" was launched out of the reform movement begun by Yablonski.

From the beginning, the MFD was drastically weakened by the methods used to fight Boyle. The orientation of those who followed Yablonski was towards the capitalist state not towards building the independent power of the workers.

Mike Trebovich, head of MFD, complained to the Secretary of Labour of irregularities in the 1969 election. In May 1972, District Judge W.B. Bryant ruled the election invalid and ordered another one to be held—this time under Labor Department supervision. It was this state-run election which thrust Miller into the UMWA leadership.

Throughout this period it was the duty of revolutionaries to point out the dangers involved in the failure of MFD to guard the independence of the union while recognising the possibilities opened up by the genuine movement in the ranks which produced that movement.

Because Miller represented a development inside the ranks of the miners, a fight with the corrupt Boyle leadership, Trotskyists should have given Miller critical support in order to test out his militant noises in practice *before the rank and file* and prepare the ground for the removal, at a later stage, of Miller himself.

The SWP, however, combined electoral support for Miller with capitulation to his politics. In the June 23 issue of the SWP's weekly *Militant*, Shelley Kramer takes up the Spartacists and the Healyite Workers League in an article "Socialists and the Miners' Strike: where the sectarians go wrong". She is, of course, able to make a strong point against the Spartacists. Writing of the effects of Miller's vicotry she says:

"Miners won the right to read, discuss and vote on their contracts—which is why they were able to turn down the coal bosses initial "ball and chain" contract offers. They won the right to elect district officials. This increased the pressure of the ranks when those officials then went to the bargaining table. And miners came to see that they were the ones with the power and their elected leaders were supposed to represent them, which contributed in no small

way to the spirit and determination of the strikers."

She is also able to attack the Spartacists strongly by showing that their assessment of MFD as "simply another manoeuvre in the interests of the capitalist class" fitted in well with Boyle's slander against MFD being "that gang of outsiders with support from rich foundations" out to "weaken and destroy the UMWA".

However, Kramer then goes on to defend the use of the courts and cites as support for this move the contention that the Trotskyists did it in the 1930s.

In preparing this article a systematic study of Dobbs' series on the Teamsters was made to investigate the SWP's claim that "the Trotskyists did it in the 1930s". Perhaps we shouldn't have bothered. The *only* example we could find of the courts being used against the bureaucracy was one which the SWP themselves had produced in the article defending Miller's action! Closer inspection of this example reveals little comfort for the SWP, however.

When Teamster President David J. Tobin sent hundreds of thugs into Minneapolis to smash up the Trotskyist dominated Local 544 and "persuade" members to transfer to another local, the Trotskyists decided that it would be tactically incorrect to use the union defence guard to ward off these attacks.

This seems to us to have been correct in the circumstances. Organised physical resistance would most likely have invited extra repression from the state and focussed attention *entirely* on the violence. The Trotskyists, as one tactic amongst several others, obtained a court injunction restraining Tobin's goons from further attacks. The purpose of the injunction was *not* to turn workers towards the capitalist state for defence, but to publicise the fact that these physical attacks were taking place. We remain unconvinced of Dobbs' arguments in defence of the court injunction. What is clear, however, is that fact that:

"Both the resort to passive resistance by individual union members and the securing of a restraining order against the goons were secondary tactics—our central effort was directed toward the use of mass action, pointed squarely at the bosses" (Teamster Bureaucracy p.133).

This is quite different from the approach taken by Miller, a bureaucrat by nature, who saw the courts as the logical path to tread in his fight to remove Boyle. Revolutionaries have the responsibility to point out the dangers of such an approach. The SWP do not seem to think there is any question of a breach in class independence involved in taking another section of the labour movement to the courts!

Another 'rank and file' movement of great significance but also tainted by its involvement with the courts is the 'Steelworkers Fight Back' grouping around Ed Sadlowski.

Barnes cites the Steelworkers Fight Back campaign as an area where some of the millions of militants looking for perspective and programme are to be found. Here, as in the miners' strike, the SWP failed to put forward an independent position. Sadlowski led a campaign against the steelworkers' leader McBride in the last Presidential elections. Some 300,000 steelworkers voted for Sadlowski's call for "a return to class struggle". Those who stood aside from this movement are criminal abstentionists who refuse to deal with the development of the class struggle as it is—not how they would like it to be.

As with Miller, revolutionaries should have combined electoral support with a critical response to Sadlowski's

programme. The SWP simply *supported* Sadlowski—stressing quotes from him which were the most militant, and largely ignoring the rest. They placed no demands on him to act in a particular way. For example, on occasion Sadlowski talked about the need for a Labor Party. In reality, he remained tied to the Democratic Party link with the trade union bureaucracy.

Nowhere did the SWP demand that Sadlowski take up in practice the fight for the Labor Party. They simply combined support for his campaign with general statements about programme—never connecting the two.

In the same issue of *Militant* which features Barnes' article, there is a major article on steel by Andrew Pulley, himself a steelworker, and a member of the SWP Political Committee. He starts his article by focussing on District 31 of the steel union where Sadlowski had his main base:

"Ed Sadlowski in his campaign for USWA President in 1976-77 gave voice to these ideas and sentiments (union democracy and class-conscious use of union power in steel). Those ideas continue to be expressed by Jim Balanoff who is District 31 director. Ideas that reflect the increasingly radical thinking and moods in the work-force—not only in that area but nationally and in other unions."

Nowhere in the rest of the article is there any other mention of Sadlowski—other than a brief comment that he ran a campaign around a "class-struggle" perspective. There is no analysis of where Sadlowski is today in the face of massive attacks on steelworkers.

Maybe we have misjudged the SWP. After all, doesn't Pulley say that Balanoff continues to express the ideas around which Sadlowski ran his campaign? While Balanoff's name does not appear in the rest of Pulley's article, he outlines the activities of District 31.

Firstly, they organised *solidarity* with the Mesabi Iron Range and miners strikes—collection of money and food and resolutions of support. Secondly, they have started a campaign for the steelworkers' right to ratify the union contract. Thirdly, they have campaigned for women's rights for example the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. They have through this drawn women into the union meetings. Fourthly, they have supported the struggle for black majority rule in South Africa.

Now, while the fight for ratification of the contract is a centrally important fight this needs to be combined with a programme to answer the attacks from the steel bosses—a programme on inflation, cut-backs, speed-up and unemployment, raising centrally workers' need for a Labour party. But in his review of District 31's activities, Pulley sees fit to raise *not one* example of how the SWP is fighting for the transitional programme within what is obviously a fertile area for revolutionaries to work in. He does not discuss the politics of people like Jim Balanoff.

The SWP, however, make a fair amount of their propaganda around the Labor Party slogan. As the capitalist crisis intensifies and employers' attacks correspondingly sharpen, the traditional leaders of the American working class begin to squirm. Recently such figures as Douglas Fraser have begun to complain of a 'broken partnership' with the capitalists.

They talk of reforming the Democratic Party, of creating a 'new alignment'. *The Militant* of 20-8-78 gives prominence to these developments, points out the failure of the bureaucrats to break with the Democratic Party, and calls for a Labor Party.

However, there is no connection between these two

strands. The SWP continues to refuse to put demands on these 'leaders' to break with the Democrats and launch a Labor Party. And when it comes to their own election propaganda, the SWP is capable of putting out the most incredible programmatic positions for people who claim to be Trotskyist.

In St Louis, for example, a leaflet issued during the recent election campaign had the following programme at the end:

- * Full employment now
- * Defend affirmative action
- * Ratify the ERA
- * Desegregate the schools
- * No Nukes

Where are the transitional demands? Where is there any talk of socialism? It seems that on occasion the SWP drop even their socialist propaganda in favour of general slogans which are designed to be popular—in this case in a leaflet directed at mainly young people.

It is now time to draw together the threads of the SWP positions outlined above. The basic theory of the SWP in relation to the trade union bureaucrats is to *outflank* them. The SWP argues that the focus for their fire is the employers.

In the miners' strike therefore, they talked about the employers' attacks and the need to resist them (while avoiding any actual call to reject the contracts). Those who attacked Miller, who pointed out that the problem facing the miners was one of *leadership*, are branded as sectarians.

When a trade union leader, however reactionary, makes a 'good' statement, the SWP simply print it—they do not follow this with demands on that leader to take up a fight. The SWP today lives off its record in the 1930s. Giants of the Trotskyist movement, like Farrell Dobbs, who led thousands of workers in struggle with the bosses and trade union bureaucrats, are evoked to defend the present opportunist practice of the SWP.

In this article we have already exposed the lie that vindication for Miller's use of the courts against Boyle can be found in the record of the Minneapolis Trotskyists. Unfortunately Dobbs himself has drawn a parallel between the SWP's work today and the method he himself used in the 1930s.

"It would be unwise. . . to begin with efforts to vote incumbent officials out of office so that correct policies might be instituted forthwith by a new leadership. . . there would be no real prospect of immediately ousting the incumbents, and a false impression could be created that they are immune to removal through an election contest.

"If the rebel forces proceed instead by pressing at the outset for official adoption, or at least tolerance, of policies that will enable the workers to fight off the capitalist assault on their living standards, better results can be obtained. As things get worse under the present officers, broadening layers of the membership will become more open-minded toward new ideas and methods of action.

"Awareness will grow that organised labor is on the wrong tack programmatically. Pressures will mount for a major shift in line. When the incumbents fail to respond adequately, more and more workers will come to recognise that the leadership personnel must be changed and they will be ready to act accordingly.

"Moves towards reconstruction of the leadership in the foregoing manner will very likely become possible mainly

at local union level during the first phase of developments. But action at that level will in itself serve to put heavy pressure on the lower echelons of the general bureaucratic structure. Instead of the bureaucracy splitting the workers to maintain its sway, the workers will be able to split the bureaucracy in their fight for rank and file control over the unions.

"Efforts toward that end can be set in motion along the lines followed in bringing William S. Brown, Patrick J. Corcoran, John T. O'Brien and other union officials over to the workers' side in the fight during the 1930s to build a more effective Teamster organisation. . . A recent positive example was the 1977 Steelworkers Fight Back campaign of Ed Sadlowski. . ." (Teamster Bureaucracy pp292-293).

We have quoted extensively from Dobbs because we think that revolutionaries must look carefully at his arguments. When it came to finding examples of court actions, the SWP was able to give one example alone from the four-book series.

Dobbs' hopes of repeating the "outflanking" tactic today with figures such as Sadlowski as a blunt instrument have to be given some sort of historical precedent. This Dobbs attempts with his references to William S. Brown, J. Corcoran and John T. O'Brien. We must accept that these are the best examples that he can find. Let us look at these people then, and see if there really is any parallel with Sadlowski today.

In early 1934, the Trotskyists in Local 574 were preparing a campaign to organise the coalyards. They took the elementary step of seeking broad-based support for strike action within the local Teamster organisation—including the leadership. They were up against the local right-wing and the national leadership of the Teamsters. When the appeal for a strike went to Union President Tobin, he replied with a detailed letter outlining complicated procedure—negotiations, arbitration, ballots etc as an alternative to militant action. It was possible to ignore this and quickly win a favourable settlement from the bosses because of the breadth of support locally and the militant tactics used in the strike.

This is where Bill S. Brown came in:

"Bill Brown, who was in his middle thirties, had worked for years as both a teamster and a truck driver in the transfer industry, which had to do mostly with hauling freight. He had held the presidency of Local 574 for ten years and in 1932 he was made organiser of the Teamsters Joint Council.

Bill was a fighter by nature and a gifted speaker, one of the best mass agitators I ever heard. As an activist in the Farmer Labor Party, he was somewhat above average in political consciousness, even though he lacked a revolutionary understanding of the class struggle. A career as an AFL official was open to him and he might have gone on in that direction if the campaign launched by the Communist League hadn't affected his life.

As it was, Bill's sound class instincts came to the fore. He wanted to give the bosses a real battle, and he welcomed help from people who knew how to organise the fight."

(Teamster Rebellion p 54)

This crack in the local bureaucracy was pushed wide open by the building of a rank and file Volunteer Organising Committee. The pressure from the ranks forced the right wing to support the organising drive—a strike was called, fought and won.

Now quite where the parallel with Sadlowski comes in, we just don't know. Sadlowski rose to prominence with anti-boss rhetoric and occasional talk of a Labor Party.

However, he has *never* broken with the Democratic Party—nor has the SWP ever put any pressure on him to do so. Furthermore, Sadlowski committed himself in his pre-election period to abide by the no-strike "Experimental Negotiating Agreement" in steel.

Bill Brown, on the other hand, helped *organise* and *win* important strikes *against* the Tobin leadership's directives! There is a wealth of difference between a Bill Brown and a Sadlowski.

In issue 72 of *Socialist Press*, we carried an article on the US steel industry in which we argued that people like Balanoff and Sadlowski should be given electoral support of a critical nature because of what they represented—a stirring in the rank and file towards class struggle methods and programme. But that electoral support must be coupled with a concrete fight for an alternative programme and demands on those leaders to go further than rhetoric.

We would agree that it is necessary to fight alongside them for the democratisation of the steel union and for the right to ratify the contract as a first step in that. But that is different from the sort of support given by the SWP, where there is *no* pressure for them to go further, and *no* demand that they break from the Democrats and begin the construction of a Labor Party.

The SWP's present tactical orientation therefore winds up as no more than occasional empty propaganda, coupled to a capitulation in practice to the opportunist programme of left elements of the bureaucracy.

This stands in sharp contrast to the kind of work which enabled the Minneapolis Trotskyists to win over such militants as Brown, Corcoran and O'Brien. Then, despite certain weaknesses in the development of political propaganda around the class battles of the time, the Trotskyists built their base firmly on their practical intervention into the daily struggles of the working class. Those won to such a position—unlike the Sadlowskis and Millers of today—had shown their capacity and willingness to break from and fight the labour bureaucracy.

When Minneapolis militants went into action, they were led, guided and organised by Trotskyists. The sheer power of the drive towards unionisation—tapped and organised as it was by Dobbs and others—was enough to force people like Brown to come over.

There is a wealth of difference between breaking the bureaucracy through the sheer power of your implantation and agitation, and lamely tail-ending a bureaucrat from a position of relative weakness.

The situation in which Dobbs and the Trotskyists found themselves was one which lent itself to the tactic of outflanking. In a period of rising militancy, with a vast surrounding area open to unionisation and wages struggles, Local 574 (later 544) was able to provide an avenue of struggle against the bosses. In the leadership of these struggles, Dobbs was able to mobilise workers in such a way that they provided a base against Tobin and his agents in the Minneapolis labour movement. Dobbs was able to actually *organise* workers in struggle against the employers.

The situation the SWP finds itself in today is different. For example in the steel industry the central attacks are cutbacks, speed-up and unemployment. A programme must be put forward to answer these attacks.

The SWP does print transitional demands on occasion. *Militant* carries articles outlining calls for 'open the books', work-sharing on full pay and so on. But these demands are seldom anything more than general statements or electoral

policies. There is little indication that these demands are carried into practice. For example in Pulley's article there is no report of any fight carried out around them in District 31.

This is not surprising. Any fight for these demands would bring the SWP into conflict with Balanoff and Sadlowski.

The SWP in its trade union work seems in short to have a rigid theory of "stages": *first* democratise the union; *then*, at a later stage, presumably introduce the programme in day-to-day struggle.

Another difference we have to point to is the stage of development in the Trotskyist movement. You won't find transitional demands in Dobbs' Teamster books. It was not until the late 1930s that Trotsky fought to take the programme into the practice of the SWP.

When learning from the 1930s methods of Dobbs, we should always remember Trotsky's criticisms of the Trotskyist-run Teamster paper *North-West Organiser* as "non-political", and keep in mind the failure of the

Minneapolis struggles to advance the fight for a Labour Party in the USA.

Today we stand 40 years after the adoption of our programme. No excuses remain for the SWP to avoid the painful task of raising the revolutionary programme and conflicting with the dissident bureaucrats.

You can "outflank" the right-wing only when there is a strong left-wing which is actually in motion. But if your strategy is aligning with the most 'left' section of the bureaucracy, then you have to select that wing whatever its programme happens to be.

There are already signs that the SWP's opportunist programme and attempt to "turn the party into industry" are each producing cracks and strains within its own ranks. But unless the whole *method* of approach of the leadership is subjected to a ruthless critique, such splits will lead not towards a reaffirmation of Trotsky's programme and principles, but towards sectarianism and demoralisation.

Left in the Limelight

In this regular feature in 'Trotskyism Today' we aim to bring together material from a wide range of sources on the left internationally, to make available to our readers information and views they may well otherwise miss, or which we feel should be savoured anew. We invite readers to submit suggested material for this feature — with or without their own comments.

Iran workers call for communism

The departure of the Shah by no means resolves the problems confronted by Iranian workers. Rather they face the task of pressing ahead with the struggle for their own independent interests and the socialist overthrow of Iranian capitalism while denied any form of revolutionary party. Sections of workers are acutely aware of this problem, as indicated in this translated leaflet, handed out in Iran in December.

When the most honest and devoted sons and daughters of the people were being martyred in their isolated struggles we workers with our continuous and preserving

movement were daily taking new steps, though at times very small, towards class struggle.

With our own power we can merely reach trade union consciousness. At the time when workers were being martyred for our economic demands then more than ever we needed to acquire "class, political, and socialist consciousness".

This consciousness can only be acquired from the outside of the workplace and this is now the fundamental task of the revolutionary intellectuals (. . .)

Today again we workers are the vanguard of the mass national movement.

We have been the most important factor for the preservation and continuity of the recent religious, democratic and socialist movements.

For example, after the "Bloody Friday" (8 September 1978) we were the predominant force which maintained the continuation of the movement through our economic and political strikes; especially the heroic political strikes in the oil and steel industry, and by the Tehran cement workers.

We thus produced a revolutionary momentum and strength within the general movement of the masses.

But today we still lack consciousness and a leading independent revolutionary organisation.

We must bear in mind that a lack of a united revolutionary working class organisation has been the cause of all the historical defeats of our mass movements.

To prevent a repeat of these defeats, the fundamental task of today for the working class's freedom fighters is to bring about the formation of such a class organisa-

tion.
THE FUNDAMENTAL TASKS OF
REVOLUTIONARY INTELLEC-
TUALS!

1. Forming revolutionary cells for theoretical education and the mobilisation of these cells around the slogan "Forward towards formation of the working class party".

2. United and consistent efforts to connect these cells to the revolutionary mass movement and especially to the workers movement.

Persistent efforts in propaganda

and agitation among industrial workers and the people.

3. Formation of the revolutionary assemblies of workers as the basis of the working class party.

4. Production and distribution of propaganda, agitational and stimulating publications and pamphlets for the workers.

5. Creation of a "Unity in action" between communist organisations to further consciousness and organisation of the working class.

To pave a healthy way forward for the ideological struggles

between these organisations.

We will clarify our problems in future leaflets.

ORGANISED WORK EVERY-
THING: SCATTERED WORK
NOTHING.

FORWARD TOWARDS UNITY
WITH THE WORKING CLASS
MOVEMENT.

FORWARD TOWARDS THE
FORMATION OF THE COMMUN-
IST PARTY OF IRAN.

December 10, 1978

Signed

Revolutionary Group of Workers

Together down the dead-end road to "Unity"

The opportunist "Socialist Unity" policy now being tirelessly flogged by the British International Marxist Group is only one reflection of the hell-for-leather scramble towards unprincipled mergers and fusions by self-styled "Trotskyists" internationally.

The biggest single example is the dissolution of the warring IMT and LTF factions within the "United" Secretariat of the Fourth International while every major difference between them remains unresolved.

But in their own, much smaller, fashion, two US 'Trotskyist' groups — the TOC and the CRSP — have pressed ahead with a merger which carries all the opportunist characteristics of the more ambitious projects dreamed up by the USFI leaders.

Two organisations with obvious and virtually total disagreement on almost every issue of strategic and tactical policy have pooled their resources in order to serve up their combined confusion to the US working class.

A gauge of their differences — and the abysmal level at which they have been discussed — can be obtained from this following report of the CRSP conference published by the TOC only a month before the "unity" deal:

The Committee for a Revolutionary Socialist Party (CRSP) had its first national conference at the beginning of October for the stated purpose of the "reconstruction of American Trotskyism and the regroupment of radical forces in this country."

We in the Trotskyist Organizing Committee (TOC) agree with this aim and sent an observer to the conference. The conference clearly established that CRSP has, generally, accepted the five programmatic points which the TOC had posed as a principled basis for

Trotskyist unity: the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism, the necessity of an international of revolutionary Marxism, the validity of the Transitional Programme, the construction of a broad leftwing in the unions and the need for a labor party.

However, it also clearly established that serious strategic and tactical differences continue to exist between our two organisations, differences which this article will explore.

(...)

SERIOUS OMISSIONS

However, it is disturbing that the organisers of the conference could not fit in any time in a four day period to deal with such subjects as: organising the unorganised, the formation of youth and unemployed organisations, how practical work should be carried out in the unions or the fight for a labor party. There was not time for these topics because nearly three days of the conference were taken up by a discussion of "socialist feminism".

If "socialist feminism" meant the struggle for the equality of women, we in the TOC would be socialist feminists, just as we are supporters of the fight for equality of all the oppressed. But the comrades in CRSP and the Freedom Socialist Party, its largest component, are not talking about equality. Instead "socialist feminism" is being used as a buzz word, with each speaker and writer giving it a different meaning. The CRSP comrades deny that they are advocating female superiority or that feminism means hating men. But they emphasize the need for leadership by women as well as the need for women to organise

separately from men. One of the sister organisations of the Freedom Socialist Party, Radical Women, excludes men from membership.

Presumably, Radical Women is a transitional organisation where women can learn to think and speak without the inhibiting presence of men. We in TOC disagree with the separatism of women just as we disagreed with the separatism of Blacks and Chicanos which leads them towards nationalism rather than socialism.

(...)

It is particularly ironic that those who advocate the exclusion of men do it on the basis that women are somehow inferior to men in social skills and need such a transitional organisation in order to be in the same organisation with men. (The CRSP comrades play with the idea of "the natural superiority of women" which doesn't accord with this other stated position). But the CRSP comrades do not seem to be aware that most male workers also lack public speaking skills and know absolutely nothing more than women workers—and often a great deal less—about writing a leaflet or using a mimeograph machine.

(...)

It may very well be true women workers will unite together before men. In some areas, Black workers will organise and provide the most militant cadres before women. In other areas, young workers, male and female, Black and white, will provide that leadership.

In such situations, caucuses may develop which will be largely Black, or largely women, or largely white. But CRSP announces before the fact that women will be the vanguard. Really, comrades,

because your organisation in Seattle consists of largely of women (many of whom are lesbian and white) does not mean that other sections of the working class still politically backward will not come forward in the future.

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

At the CRSP conference, several speakers asserted that the lesbian movement was in the vanguard of the women's movement because lesbians reject the nuclear family. We fully support the struggle of women now breaking with the traditional sex roles imposed upon them by class society, but we cannot take seriously the position that being lesbian or gay is in itself a revolutionary step. (. . .)

Alternative life styles may annoy the ruling class, but not really threaten it. Many radicals have become involved in the so-called Food Buying Conspiracies. Although it is laudable to sell food at lower cost than the big super-market chains, Safeway and the A&P are not about to go bankrupt. Neither is capitalism going to collapse because lesbians and gays stop having families. Of course, capitalism would cease to exist if women stopped having babies, but so would all human society at that point—scarcely what CRSP is advocating!

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

Although the CRSP comrades say they are for the Transitional Programme, the practical work they propose has practically nothing in common with the actual Transitional Programme. Their programme is reforms *now*, the Transitional Programme *later*. The document by Robert Crisman says as much, "We must support and lead the fight for the most minimal reforms". But the Transitional Programme does "not discard the programme of the old minimal demands . . . the old 'minimal programme' is superseded by the Transitional Programme . . ."

CRSP supports quotas and "affirmative action" in admissions to colleges. The TOC opposes quotas for the same reason we opposed the preference given previously to the white middle class. Quotas divide the working class among white workers, Black workers, women workers, etc., in the fight for the leavings of decaying capitalism. On this basis, quotas are not an *affirmative* action, but play into the hands of reaction and fascism. The TOC fights for *open admissions* to the universities, so that everyone who wishes an education can obtain it.

The democratic demand for open admissions becomes a transitional demand in this period when the bourgeoisie is raising tuition costs and cutting back on scholarships.

(. . .)

Quotas, "affirmative" hiring, "affirmative" layoffs, etc., are proposed on the premise that, as the working class cannot beat the bourgeoisie at this time, it is necessary to negotiate a compromise. The TOC representative at the CRSP conference compared the CRSP to a "lifeboat" which would make the white male worker walk the plank because there were not enough provisions in the boat to feed everyone. The programme of quotas to lighten the boat is scarcely the kind of programme to unite the class. The TOC believes it is our task to teach the working class how to *win* their struggles, not to negotiate defeats.

(. . .)

The CRSP leadership may correctly point to the SWP's mistaken tactics in Portugal in supporting the Socialist Party, but Comrade Murry Weiss and other CRSP comrades supported the manoeuvres of the Communist Party and General Carvalho which used the ultraleft—and also Trotskyists—as catspaws of the "left" military bureaucrats.

(. . .)

EMPIRICISM AND MARXIST METHOD

The CRSP comrades begin with their particular experiences. Their experience in a particular union led them to advocate independent unionism, their genuine vanguard role in struggles in Seattle led them to generalise this position. Their experience with sexism as individuals and within the radical movement led them to generalise about men. Although the method of empiricism may be satisfied with experiential knowledge, the Marxist method recognises the existence of objective reality and, therefore, of knowledge which has penetrated beneath the immediate subjective experience to a scientific understanding of complex interacting social phenomena, of theoretical knowledge. The experiential knowledge of living under capitalism leads to cynicism or to the panglossian acceptance of this "best of all possible worlds", with socialism left to some future time.

(. . .)

Yet despite the clearly hopeless nature of the CRSP, November 16 saw the publication of the following utterly bankrupt statement by the TOC, in

which even questions of strategy are brushed aside as irrelevant in the rush to 'unity' at all costs:

Over the past few months, the Trotskyist Organizing Committee (TOC) and the Committee for a Revolutionary Socialist Party (CRSP) have been discussing the basis for a principled unity of Trotskyists in the United States.

As a result of these discussions and attendance at the first national CRSP conference of an observer, we in the TOC have decided to join CRSP. We have, therefore, dissolved the TOC and ended the publication of *Socialist Appeal* with its October issue.

(. . .)

Is it possible to unite Trotskyists in one vanguard party given the sharp strategic and tactical differences among all formations? We say that unity can and must be achieved!

(. . .)

But our polemics should not obscure the areas of agreement which unite us. The TOC and CRSP as a whole have reached general programmatic agreement on the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism, on the need to build the Fourth International, on the validity of the Transitional Programme, on constructing a rank and file movement in the unions, and on a labor party based on the unions independent of the capitalist parties.

(. . .)

STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL DIFFERENCES.

But what about our differences? They remain. We will continue to differ on the Equal Rights Amendment, on feminism, on "affirmative action" on comradely relations with the Socialist Workers Party, on Portugal and on other questions.

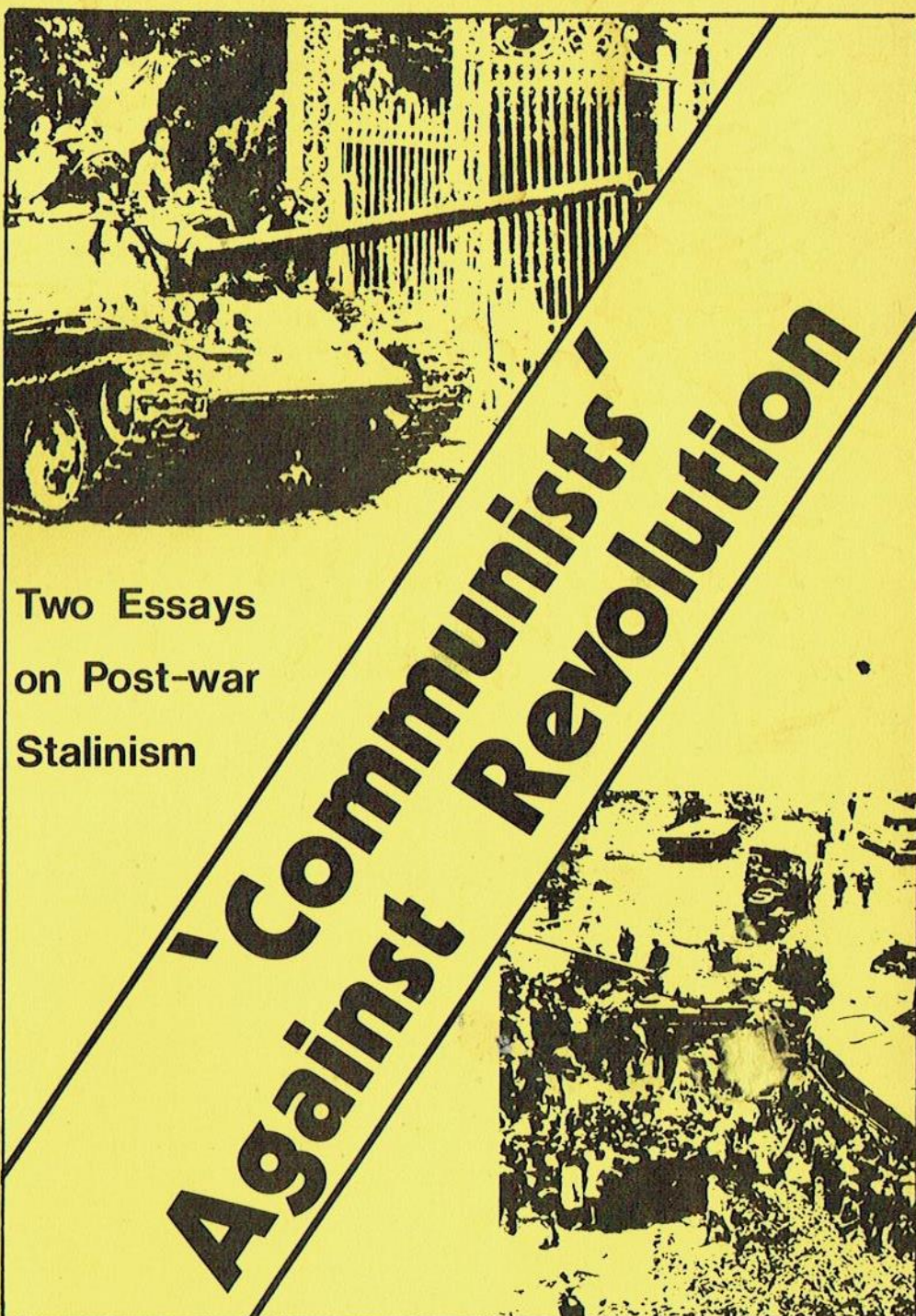
We will constitute a tendency within CRSP. We will seek to convince the organisation of the validity of our strategic and tactical positions while working together loyally to build it.

(. . .)

Those who insist on raising every strategic and tactical difference to the level of principle and as the basis for division, who insist that only unity on their strategic and tactical line is permissible and possible will never achieve it. On the contrary, they will only insure new splits in their own organisations. But the emerging revolutionary opportunities require unity—of the Trotskyists and of the working class—not splits.

**Have
you
read
it
yet?**

The essay *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* by Tim Wohlforth — until now virtually unobtainable — now republished with a commentary by Adam Westoby entitled *On Wohlforth's 'Theory of Structural Assimilation'*.



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on Post-war
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