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Chinese troops going into action in support of North Korea

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL - PROBLEMS AND TASKS

This document, adopted at the Founding Conference of the WSL on the 19th October, is intended to form the basis of a discussion within the world Trotskyist movement on the theoretical problems and tasks which need to be confronted in rebuilding the Fourth International. By beginning an analysis of the history of the post-war Trotskyist movement, and centrally, of the problems posed by the development of post-war Stalinism, the document attempts to focus discussion on some of the fundamental questions of method and principle which in the view of the WSL have to be clarified before a firm basis can be established for a reconstructed International.

PART TWO

THE EARLY POST WAR PERIOD

At the end of the war the European Secretariat joined with the International Secretariat (which had been transferred to the United States at the outbreak of war) to organise an International Conference, in the spring of 1946, from which it elected new international leadership bodies charged with preparations for the Second World Congress (which took place in 1948). In Europe Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel (German) were two of the leading figures.

The International Conference of 1946 was shortly followed by the SWP's 12th. National Convention (November 1946), which adopted Cannon's 'Theses on the American Revolution'. (8) Both these bodies - and especially the SWP convention - while formally insisting on the continued counter-revolutionary character of Stalinism, in retrospect can be seen to have seriously underestimated the extent to which Stalinism's collaboration with imperialism was already creating the conditions for the lengthy post-war economic boom in Europe and America.

The SWP 'Theses' in particular, basing themselves on the militancy of the US working class in the immediate post-war period (SWP membership doubled in less than a year, to just over 2000), and on the assumption of an incipient economic crisis and revolutionary struggles in Europe, saw the American working class as taking the lead in revolutionary struggles in the immediate future. (9)

But those - such as Michael Banda in his obituary of Cannon (Workers Press, October 1974) - who retrospectively denigrate them as a 'hodge-podge' and 'mystical conception of the US working class', should recall that the situation in Europe was not finally 'stabilised' until, at the earliest 1948, with the betrayal of the Italian

general strike at the hands of the Stalinists, and the economic 'boom' did not really get under way until the early 1950's. And, from 1946 on, the Cold War and the nuclear arms build-up took over from the short post-war honeymoon between the USSR and the imperialist powers.

The post-war development of the International, up to the split with Pablo in 1953, must be treated as a whole. It is wholly false to pick out, as the latter-day historians of the WRP do, certain weaknesses of a particular moment in order to blame Cannon as being responsible for Pabloism and a 'pragmatist' from the beginning, and to leave the present WRP leadership with a reputation as 'infallible', consistently struggling for Marxism all the time.

Such an approach, seeing the development of revisionism in the International as the consequence of this or that particular form of bourgeois outlook, or as the result of the fixedly reactionary character of this or that individual leader, leaves out the active side of all consciousness, and especially of Marxist theory. It overlooks the fact that an isolated, partly immature, and theoretically unseasoned international leadership was struggling - with an inadequate grasp of Marxism - to understand and develop a strategy for events of enormous complexity and novelty, which to this day have not been properly grasped from a Marxist standpoint.

FIGHT

They had to *fight*, theoretically, politically and materially, to gain anything at all. To approach their struggles as though Marxism and revisionism (or, as in the WRP's version 'truth' and 'error') were ready-made and on the stage from the outset is to bury the very possibility of making theoretical gains *today* from the history of the International, and to make it impossible either to present the main factual developments truthfully, or to arrive at any accurate assessment of the political groupings and tendencies that have come out of those struggles.

This is why the WRP's 'history', *Trotskyism and Revisionism*, apart from its numerous incidental falsities, throws out the baby with the bathwater by starting the account only when (after the Third World Congress in 1951) the International was in an acute state of theoretical and organisational crisis and paralysis. Only by tracing the roots of that crisis is it possible to resolve it and overcome its results.

The 'vices of Cannon' theory of Pabloism, now espoused by the WRP leadership, is the sour and reactionary offspring of the weak side of the International Committee from its very start - the tendency to return to 'orthodoxy' as though Marxist theory was something that could be put in a pot and 'preserved' against revisionism, while the world simultaneously changes round our ears.

From the very end of the war, the International was in a state of more-or-less continual theoretical disorientation, its perspectives continually being overthrown in major respects by events, and the need for reorganisation, the building of the sections and the need to turn to major new developments, continually cutting across the need to reassess and renew its positions.

Thus, in the discussion on economic prospects immed-

ately after the war, underconsumptionist positions were widely put about by some of the leading American theoreticians (10) and had even found their way into the SWP's 1946 'Theses'. These, like the incorrect political assessments of both Europe and America, are not taken up before a new area of discussion took up the energies of the movement; the problem of the Eastern European 'buffer' countries occupied by the Red Army.

There was, of course, a degree of 'pragmatism' in the way that some Trotskyists approached developments in these states, and the theoretical problems raised by them from the very beginning. But the main fountain-head of 'pragmatism' was in the policies pursued by Joseph Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy. They behaved just as pragmatically - and, when seen in detail, just as erratically - as they did when Stalin signed his ill-fated 'non-aggression pact' with Hitler just before the war.

'NEXT STEP'

When Stalin agreed the partition of the European states with imperialism at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences he did not (as numerous subsequent revelations testify) proceed on the basis of any prepared plan for the social reorganisation of Eastern Europe. On the contrary, his goals were strictly limited to the 'next step', arising immediately from the near destruction of the Soviet Union (and the Stalin bureaucracy with it) in the war. Trusting none of the imperialist states, the bureaucracy resolved to protect their own military position by placing Eastern Europe under the Red Army and placing it 'out of bounds' to imperialist armies.

A secondary, but important aim was to use this control of Eastern Europe - together with some reparations from the part of Germany reserved to the western 'allies' - to extract part of the means for Soviet economic reconstruction. Class interests came not third or tenth, but nowhere at all in Stalin's calculations at the end of the war. The Red Army became the vehicle for reconstructing bourgeois states, with governments formed by coalitions of Stalinists and bourgeois politicians. In a number of cases - East Germany, Hungary - where adequate and acceptable bourgeois political formations could not be found, Stalinist agents operated in disguise to form and build such parties, to act as their partners in the coalitions.

As the Red Army advanced through Eastern Europe it was met (or anticipated) in many areas by mass uprisings of workers and peasants. In some areas this reached the point of a general revolutionary upsurge - in Czechoslovakia as the Red Army approached, in Rumania and Bulgaria in the summer of 1944, in the strongest working class concentrations of Germany and Austria even.

In all cases, Stalinist policy was to contain and put down these movements, never to ally with them or to build them. The reconstruction of the bourgeois states, and the armed power of the Red Army, were the two main instruments which Stalin used to deal with these revolutionary movements and the props on which he rested in the early period, up to 1947.

In this period, too, important nationalisations took place, but not as part of a systematic plan. The reasons for them were various. In some plants, occupied by the workers, 'nationalisation' was immediately part of the drive against revolution, taking the economic and political power out of the hands of the workers and transferring it to the state. In other cases - where the owners were either German or had fled to the west - production could only be continued by a state take-over.

Backing up both these factors was the need for the state to intervene widely to ensure that large amounts of resources got shipped to the Soviet Union. In some cases, especially in East Germany, whole plants were confiscated, nationalised, and their moveable equipment shipped off wholesale to the Soviet Union. This period of stabilisation of capitalist regimes in East Europe continues right into 1947 - i.e. until well after the opening of the Cold War by American and British imperialism, in late 1946.

The definitely bourgeois character of the regimes is highlighted by the fact that the monarchy was retained in Rumania, where Stalinists drank a daily toast to King Michael and the 'radical' leader of a peasant party was even jailed for anti-monarchical 'activities'. (11)

The 1948 World Congress of the Fourth International continued to regard the Eastern European states as capitalist, though on a basis that ruled out the bureaucratic overturns that were even then under way: 'the real destruction of capitalism (in the 'buffer' states) can take place only as a result of the revolutionary mobilisation of masses, and the elimination of the special forms of exploitation introduced by the bureaucracy in these countries. . . ." (12)

NATIONALISATION

As the nationalisations were driven through and the bourgeois coalitions overthrown in Eastern Europe, they prompted a search for 'criteria' of when a state was or was not a workers' state: according to whether or not political frontiers with the Soviet Union were abolished; according to the level of nationalisation; the capacity for planning; the nationalisation of agriculture.

Mandel was the leading theoretician who kept insisting
continued overlea



Mandel

that while on the road to 'structural assimilation', these states were not yet workers' states. Mandel's most central objection, though, lay not in any of the particular set of 'criteria' he put forward at a particular time, but in the fact that it appeared from the events as they developed that to designate them 'workers' states' would contradict Lenin's theory of the bourgeois state - that capitalism could only be abolished by the working class, under revolutionary leadership, forcibly destroying the existing state apparatus and replacing it by its own.

In due course, though, an empirical recognition of 'the facts' was forced on the movement in the resolutions of the Third World Congress (1951) which admitted that 'It has turned out that the revolutionary action of the masses is not an indispensable condition needed by the bureaucracy to be able to destroy capitalism in exceptional... circumstances. (13) In such an admission, though hemmed round with qualifications about 'exceptional circumstances' one can already see the seeds of the disorientation that was to lead, within two years, to Pablo's liquidationism, the pressure to subordinate the independent revolutionary policies and organisations of the working class to Stalinism.

One can see too why the SWP, in justifying its going over to the Pabloites in 1962-3, was forced to explicitly defend the resolutions of the Third World Congress and the discussion leading up to them. After all, the empirical recognition of the 'fact' that Castro's Cuba had become a workers' state was to play essentially the same role in the SWP's passage over to Pabloism.

ATTACK

For this reason, the SWP leadership sharply attacked Tim Wohlforth - supporting the general line of the British and French sections of the IC in 1963 - when he attempted to go back to the methodological premises put forward in the 'buffer zone' discussion, and identify in the Third World Congress resolutions the crystallisation of Pablo's essential direction. (14)

But there was another, specific, factor which intervened in the discussion which led up to the Third World Congress - though in the light of 25 years of experience it can seem less important than it appeared at the time. Hardly had the delegates from the Second World Congress returned home in April 1948 than came Tito's break with Stalin (June 1948). This was to be the main element on which Pablo seized in developing his line that 'under pressure of the masses' Stalinist parties could cease to be Stalinist and lead revolutions.

Immediately, the Fourth International responded by sending an open letter (15) appealing for fraternal ties with the Yugoslav CP, and the French section, in particular, became active in organising young people to go to Yugoslavia to help in economic reconstruction. Much as the SWP was to encourage trips to Cuba in the 1960's.

FREE REIN

Pablo received more-or-less free political rein on the question of Yugoslavia. During 1949 and 1950 numerous public articles appeared under his name (and that of Pierre Frank) sympathetically analysing the 'progressive' evolution of Tito. In the summer of 1950 the main political resolution adopted by the International Executive Committee of April was published. It contained the following astonishing passages:

XI. But what presents the greatest interest in the Yugoslav affair is the progressive evolution of the Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP) itself, which has resulted from the split - an evolution which potentially contains the greatest opportunity for the world workers' movement to be reborn on the platform of revolutionary Marxism since the Russian Revolution'.

'Confirming the assessment made by our International since the Yugoslav affair broke that the split of a Stalinist party with the Kremlin necessarily brings with it a differentiation with respect to Stalinism, which in certain conditions can show itself as eminently progressive, the YCP has followed a course which, barely two years after the break, surpasses the most optimistic prognosis.

'The ideological progress achieved by the YCP, and the corresponding achievements in Yugoslavia, demonstrate the depth of the revolutionary movement which has carried this party to power,

'XI. The general direction of the evolution of the YCP and of Yugoslavia is a more and more clear and powerful affirmation (in the realm of ideas and in the political and economic organisation of the country) of the eminently democratic essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which carries with it a determined struggle against bureaucratic degeneration.

'To the extent that the YCP perseveres on this road and, ridding itself of the last ideological vestiges of Stalinism, rediscovers the organic link between the development of the Yugoslav revolution and the world revolution which requires the regrouping of revolutionary forces on a world scale, it will become the most powerful springboard from which the decisive assault against Stalinism in crisis will set out.

'Such an evolution would also favour the organisation of the new communist opposition which is mounting in the Stalinist parties and with which it is possible to envisage at this time the construction in the near future, of Marxist-revolutionary formations in a whole series of countries'.

'Resolution on the crisis of Stalinism and the developments of the Yugoslav revolution', in *Quatrième Internationale*, May-June 1950.

A special article in the same issue drew the attention of the cadre internationally to the fact that the IEC had: 'voted... a resolution, according to which, following the victory of the proletarian revolution, there exists in Yugoslavia a workers' state and a regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat'. (ibid, p.68)

'UNITED FRONT'

At the same time the sections were organising 'united front' campaigns to defend Yugoslavia, distributing the literature of leading Titoists, the French section was organising 'work brigades' to Zagreb, and so on. But above all it is clear, from the passage quoted, that all the essential political ingredients by which Pablo, was within two years, to demand the liquidation of the Trotskyist cadres into the Stalinist ranks, are already present and being publicly put forward as the line of the International in early 1950.

One outcome of all this was that the Third World Congress resolutions separated the analysis of Yugoslavia from the rest of the 'buffer zone', even going as far as to have two separate resolutions. While, in the rest of Europe the overturns had been carried out bureaucratically, the Yugoslav CP was credited (very retrospectively) with having 'ceased to be a semi-Stalinist party and evolved as a centrist party, carried to power by the revolutionary masses', and Yugoslavia was described as having undergone a 'victorious proletarian revolution', of which the first key watershed came in the formation of the provisional government by the Communist-led partisans, in November 1943.

The main resolutions of the Third World Congress were adopted almost unanimously: most importantly they had the full support of both the American and British leaderships. The French leadership did mount some political opposition to Pablo and those who supported him, but it focussed on the liquidationist conclusions which he was already beginning to draw, in his discussion document *Where Are We Going?* The French amendments and Mandel's 'middle of the road' *Ten Theses* (which the French had adopted as their own, against Mandel's wishes) were refused a vote by the Congress on the grounds that they had not been properly discussed. (19)



Yugoslav partisans drove out the Nazis - along with many of their "own" bourgeoisie

Very shortly after the Congress (early in 1952) Pablo began to push his conclusions through in a practical form, demanding that the French leadership liquidate their section into the Communist Party, in the expectation that in the impending war-revolution in Europe similar mass pressures to those in Yugoslavia would propel the mass CP's on a revolutionary road, and that the need for an independent political organisation of the Trotskyists was therefore indefinitely postponed.

The French leadership refused to liquidate their section - at least without a full discussion, and were expelled with the full support of Mandel (who had by this time completely gone over to Pablo's line), the American leadership under Cannon, and the British leadership under Healy.

Only when, in the summer of 1953, it became clear

that Pablo intended to back those supporting liquidation into the Stalinist parties in other countries - notably the Cochran-Clarke tendency in the SWP - did the main split come, with the SWP's *Open Letter*, of November 1953, which split the world movement, coming like a bolt from the blue.

'ORTHODOXY'

It is important to understand that neither before, at, or after the split did the sections which came together to form the IC attempt any proper reply to Pablo's positions or the resolutions of the Third World Congress. They were unable to go beyond an 'orthodox' reply to the central political conclusion which he drew - the need for entry ('deep entry', 'entry sui generis') into the Stalinist parties.

In fact, even when the SWP faction-fight with the Cochran-Clarke tendency was in full swing, with the minority claiming, with a good deal of justice, that they were only consistently applying the line of the Third World Congress, Cannon continued to reiterate his support for the positions of the Congress "as they were written".



Healy



Cannon

The Pabloite leaders, for their part, saw the split in a wholly idealist way. They denounced the Cannonite tendency as expressing the pressure not of social forces but of "tradition, routine and conservatism", and they "explained" the split with analogies so broad as to be meaningless:

"What has happened with Trotskyism is what has often happened in history with the continuators of doctrines and schools, some transforming the old writings of the Master into a dead, or misunderstood, letter, into outmoded schemas, by-passed analyses, the others holding above all to the spirit of his thought and continuing to work, that is to say, to analyse the new moving reality, with his method and in the framework of his principles.

"To take only examples which are relatively recent in history and familiar to Marxists, let us recall the two tendencies which emerged from Hegel after his death; revolutionary Marxism and the emasculated Marxism taken from Marx's work after his death; the struggle of Trotsky after Lenin's death against the "traditional" epigones twisting the profound revolutionary spirit of Leninism". (The Situation in the International, QI, Jan-Feb 54, p62)

IMPRESSIONS

There was a grain of truth in the Pabloites' attacks upon orthodoxy. But it is true to say that scarcely a single element in their 'new' themes has survived even the impressions of the period since then.

There has, in fact, been only one attempt to go back to this period and set out an overall reply to Pablo from within the International Committee - Tim Wohlforth's *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*. This was prepared while Wohlforth led a pro-SLL group against the SWP 'reunification' with Pabloism in the early 1960's. But Wohlforth's positions were never adopted by the IC, or systematically discussed among the sections, and his later works on the history of the SWP and of the International do not refer to them.

For similar reasons, the WRP leadership last year dropped its plans to republish the main documents from the whole post war period of the International, and issued instead the distorted *Trotskyism v Revisionism*, which artificially begins the account round the Third World Congress (though without publishing a single one of the main resolutions of that Congress). The defence of 'orthodoxy' where orthodoxy proves inadequate, has now turned into its opposite, the falsification of history.

These limitations of the IC also explain why their - very cautious - analysis of the Chinese revolution, in the mid 1950's also amounted to little more than a broadening of the 'orthodox' positions it had earlier defended and which it had never re-examined. It will be essential to bear these factors in mind when we consider the later crises of the IC, and the theoretical positions on which the participants said they were basing themselves.

THE POST WAR WORLD AND THE THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION

But before we go on to these developments it is necessary to say very strongly that in our opinion the International can only be rebuilt in a principled way through a discussion which embraces these questions.



Delegates to the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, 1920

transcending the positions which were 'closed' at the Third World Congress, and were re-opened only slightly in relation to China in the mid-1950s. Pablo used phrases like 'new world reality' as the lubricant for adaptation to Stalinism. But this should not be used to obscure the fact that post-war reality was and is in essential 'new' — i.e. different from pre-war reality.

The essential shape of the world in which we live, and the political contours in which the boom has turned to crisis, were essentially formed in the first decade after the war by:

1. The restabilisation of capitalism over most of the world's surface by collaboration between the Stalinists and the great imperialist powers.
2. The social overturns in Eastern Europe and their transformation into workers' states — most of which continue to be directly and indirectly policed to this day by Soviet military intervention, or the threat of it.
3. The Chinese social revolution.

These huge events cannot be grasped simply by repeating the analysis of 'world reality' hammered out by Trotsky on the eve of the Second World War, introducing the important changes merely as 'exceptions' or secondary modifications. We have, at this time, several important advantages over those who struggled to understand these developments as they went on: more than twenty years have shown that the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism on a world scale is in no way diminished; the passage of time has provided many additional sources of evidence on what, factually, occurred in the post-war developments; above all, the international offensive of the working class, directly confronting the rule of capitalism and undermining the basis of Stalinist political leadership, has produced important discussions and splits within the world movement.

METHOD

In particular the split within the WRP revolved on a grasp of the *method* of the Transitional Programme and Marxism itself, under conditions where it was possible to test 'theoretical' positions against action which was not limited to propaganda, but involved intervention among large numbers or organised workers.

We must therefore indicate the standpoint from which we consider post-war history should be grasped and the perspectives and organisation of the FI reconstructed. But to do this we must return not only to the history of the International itself, together with the main turning-points of post-war history, but also to the general conception of the epoch first set out by Trotsky, accepted by Lenin, and later defended and renewed by Trotsky against its Stalinist opponents — the theory of permanent revolution.

The theory of permanent revolution was first put forward by Trotsky to prepare for the Russian revolution. It defended the idea that — far from there being a necessary series of distinct 'stages' in social development: first a bourgeois-democratic revolution against the Czarist autocracy and feudalism and only later, after a considerable period of capitalist development, the struggle for the proletarian revolution — the bourgeois revolution would be forced, especially in order to solve the agrarian problem and answer the demands of the peasantry, to 'pass over' directly into the revolution against bourgeois property relations.

1905

Trotsky set out this aspect of the theory in 'Results and Prospects', written immediately after his experience in the Leadership of the Petrograd Soviet during the 1905 revolution — in the event, under the leadership

of Lenin himself, it became an essential element in the Bolsheviks' preparation for power between February and October 1917. Later, in 1928, Trotsky was to defend and develop the theory in polemic against the Stalinists, who were obliged to attack it to justify the theory of 'stages' behind which they subordinated the socialist revolution in China to the savageries of the bourgeois Kuomintang

PROGRAMME

In *The Permanent Revolution* (1928) Trotsky makes it clear that it was not a question of one particular 'theory' of social development against another. The book ends:

"The struggle of the Communist Left Opposition for a correct policy and a healthy regime in the Communist International is inseparably bound up with the struggle for the Marxist programme. The question of the programme is in turn inseparable from the question of the two mutually exclusive theories: the theory of permanent revolution and the theory of socialism in one country. The theory of permanent revolution has long ago outgrown the episodic differences of opinion between Lenin and Trotsky, which were completely exhausted by history. The struggle is between the basic ideas of Marx and Lenin on the one side and the eclecticism of the centrists on the other." (*The Permanent Revolution*, New Park Edition, p. 157)

In originally setting out the theory of permanent revolution, one of the main things which Trotsky insisted on was the great variety of political forms, of aims and limits, taken by the bourgeois revolutions — revolutions from which the proletariat was not absent, but in which it was not able to reach for the helm of political leadership on its own account. In particular he compared the French revolution of 1789 with the revolutions of 1848:

"History does not repeat itself. However much one may compare the Russian Revolution with the Great French Revolution, the former can never be transformed into a repetition of the latter. The 19th century has not passed in vain.

The year 1848 already differs tremendously from 1789. In comparison with the Great Revolution, the Prussian and Austrian Revolutions surprise one with their insignificant sweep. In one way they took place too early and in another too late. That gigantic exertion of strength which is necessary for bourgeois society to settle radically with the lords of the past can only be attained either by the power of a unanimous nation rising against feudal despotism, or by the mighty development of the class struggle within this nation striving to emancipate itself. In the first case, which was what happened in 1789-93, the national energy, compressed by the fierce resistance of the old order, was wholly expended in the struggle against reaction; in the second case, which has never yet occurred in history, and which we are considering merely as a possibility, the actual energy necessary for overcoming the dark forces of history is generated within the bourgeois nation by means of an 'internecine' class war. The severe internal friction, absorbing a great deal of energy and depriving the bourgeoisie of the possibility of playing the chief role, urges its antagonist the proletariat to the forefront, gives the proletariat ten years' experience in a month, places it at the head of affairs, and hands it the tightly-drawn reins of power. This class, determined, knowing no doubts, imparts a mighty sweep to events. Revolution can be achieved either by a nation gathering itself together like a lion preparing to spring, or by a nation in the process of struggle becoming conclusively divided in order to free the best part of itself for the execution of those tasks which the nation as a whole is unable to carry out. These are two opposite sets of historical conditions, which in their pure form are, of course, possible only in logical contraposition. A middle course in this, as in so

many cases, is worst of all, but it was this middle course that developed in 1848". (*Results and Prospects*, NP ed., p 184f)

He goes on to explain:

"In 1848 the bourgeoisie was already unable to play a comparable role. It did not want and was not able to undertake the revolutionary liquidation of the social system that stood in its path to power. We know now why that was so. Its aim was — and of this it was perfectly conscious — to introduce into the old system the necessary guarantees, not for its political domination, but merely for a sharing of power with the forces of the past. It was meanly wise through the experience of the French bourgeoisie, corrupted by its treachery and frightened by its failures. It not only failed to lead the masses in storming the old order, but placed its back against this order so as to repulse the masses who were pressing it forward." (*Results and Prospects*, NP edition, p 187f)

It was this 'sweep' of the 1789-93 revolution which led Trotsky to use it, in 1906, as an analogy for the development of the Russian revolution, and later to go back to the counter-revolutionary Thermidor of 1993 in his attempt to grasp the basis and nature of the Stalinist usurpation in the Soviet Union and the Comintern.

OCTOBER

And we should note carefully that what Trotsky was considering "merely as a possibility" which had "never yet occurred in history" was precisely what happened in Russia between February and October 1917, giving the proletariat "ten years' experience in a month" and handing it "the tightly-drawn reins of power".

When Trotsky brought together the struggle for the Fourth International against Stalinism in writing the Transitional Programme, he did not exclude the possibility that state power could be taken under the leadership of the bureaucracy:

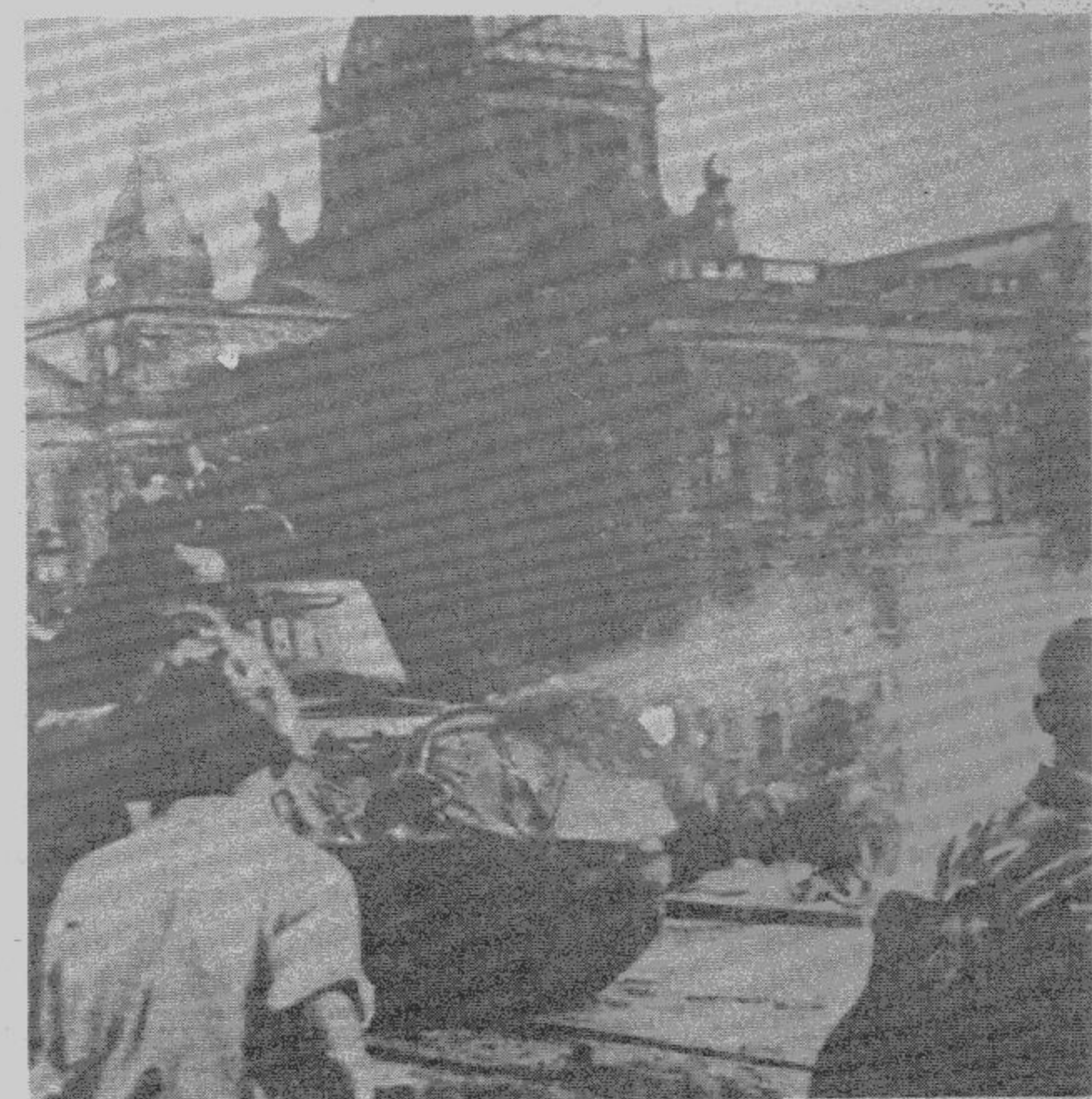
"Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' organisations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is to say the least highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty-bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish to go along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and "workers' and farmers' government" in the above-mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat.

However, there is no need to indulge in guesswork. The agitation around the slogan of a workers'-farmers' government preserves under all conditions a tremendous educational value. And not accidentally. This generalised slogan proceeds entirely along the line of the political development of our epoch (the bankruptcy and decomposition of the old bourgeois parties, the downfall toward more active and aggressive politics). Each of the transitional demands should, therefore, lead to one and the same political conclusion: the workers need to break with all traditional parties of the bourgeoisie in order, jointly with the farmers, to establish their own power.

It is impossible in advance to foresee what will be the concrete stages of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses. The sections of the Fourth International should critically orient themselves at each new stage and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the workers for independent politics, deepen the class character of these politics, destroy reformist and pacifist illusions, strengthen the connection of the vanguard with the masses, and prepare the revolutionary conquest of power." (*Transitional Programme*, SWP edition, p95).

NOT FORMULAE

We quote these passages to highlight the fact that Trotsky fought, throughout the huge events and changes which divided 1905 from 1940, not on the basis of fixed formulae, but on the basis of the world view of dialectical materialism, struggling always to forge that programme and those slogans which could weld together, give direction to, and make victorious the distinct but combined revolutionary tasks of the proletariat and the other



Hungary 1956 - Stalinist tanks enforce Kremlin bureaucratic rule

oppressed classes on a world scale. This is why the particular slogans of the Transitional Programme cannot be grasped, and fought for among the masses, if they are abstracted from its overall method.

Internationally, in the period after the Second World War, the struggle against imperialism is expressed in three distinct forms, which combine on a world scale, and with-

continued overleaf



Trotsky addressing the Congress of the Communist International

in particular national societies:

1. The social revolution in the capitalist countries, requiring the construction of Marxist parties which will wrest the leadership of the working class from the bureaucrats and fight for the sole political power to be based in the bodies of the working class.
2. The political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers' states, never visible in Trotsky's lifetime, but breaking out after the war in Berlin, Budapest, Prague and China, and equally requiring Marxist parties to seize from the bureaucracy and place in the hands of democratic bodies of the working class their monopoly of state and political power; and, historically subordinate to these,
3. The democratic revolution against imperialist oppression and dictatorship, especially in the colonial and semi-colonial states.

COMBINED

These revolutions combine in a single, complex and contradictory process. They cannot be regarded as forming, in time or geographically, necessarily separate 'stages'. The unifying historical task is the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism, and of all the archaic and reactionary political and social formations preserved with it and which, at a given moment, protect it.

In this sense the essential elements of the theory of permanent revolution remain fully valid - but they must be developed to embrace the demands of the political revolution in many states, not just the Soviet Union. And, for this development, it is essential to point up features of world society which Trotsky insisted on, but which have considerably advanced since he wrote.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE AFTER 1958

Following the 1953 *Open Letter* the sections of the IC had a number of exchanges with the Pabloite International Secretariat, seeking to reopen and pursue political differences within an organisational framework which would allow eventual reunification. Early in 1954, through the intermediate role of the Ceylonese section, negotiations were conducted for both sides to attend the 'Fourth World Congress' being organised by the Pabloites.

Cannon proposed two essential conditions for such attendance - that Pablo's international centre should unconditionally withdraw the expulsions of the sections and individuals supporting the *Open Letter*, and that the Congress should be postponed to allow full discussion in the national sections beforehand. Pablo, in effect, refused to do either of these things and the IC sections did not attend the Congress. (20)

After the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, at which Krushchev made his 'secret speech', and the Hungarian uprising in the autumn of that year, the Pabloites made an apparent turn against Stalinism. At the beginning of 1957 Cannon again responded to an approach by Leslie Goonewardene, leader of the Ceylonese section, proposing discussions towards a joint world congress, and in March exchanged informal organisational proposals with a representative of Pablo. In the event Pablo refused to provide the organisational guarantees sought, and the negotiations collapsed. (21)

Then, from 1960 on, the SWP leadership began a political shift, which resulted in 1963 in the reunification of the SWP with the Pabloites (by now led by Mandel) in the United Secretariat, without discussion, and on the basis that the 1953 split would be taken up in due course. It never has been, and in the last two years the semi-public factional division in the USEI has led the

SWP leadership to publish unilaterally many of the documents relating to 1953. (22)

In writing their account of the split, and commenting upon the documents published, the present SWP leadership are obliged to tread the straight and narrow line between justifying the *Open Letter*, which declared an irrevocable break with the politics of Pabloism, and their reunification with the Pabloites in 1963. Naturally, this allows them to say little of substance. (23)

CUBA

The main political issue at stake between the SWP on the one hand, and the SLL and the OCI on the other, in the 1961-3 reunification and split in the International Committee, was the character of the Cuban revolution. Essentially, the SLL and OCI leaderships were quite correct in refusing reunification on the basis that it was carried out in describing the conduct of the SWP leadership as one of the manoeuvres to short-circuit discussion and obtain an unprincipled bloc, and in insisting that the issue of the Cuban revolution and the class character of the Cuban state was dragged in and made the sole important question in order to facilitate this.



Castro with Chile's Allende

The document with which the SWP leadership effectively consummated the split with the other main IC sections in the autumn of 1962 - Hansen's *Cuba - The Acid Test* (24) - is (especially in the context of the reunification negotiations then underway) a monument of empiricism dressed in the phraseology of Marxism. In the interests of 'a supreme sensitivity to facts' Hansen hastened to greet Castro's Cuba as a 'revolution that is shaking the Western Hemisphere', to link it with the bourgeois-nationalist movements in, for example, Algeria and Guinea, and to use it to swamp all prior discussion on the 1952-3 split.

From this he went on to denounce the British and French leaderships (especially the British) for 'sectarianism', 'metaphysics' and 'dogmatism', and on these grounds to rush into reunification with the Pabloites.

The British and French leaderships were not at one in their view of the Cuban state, or of the processes of the Cuban revolution. The French regarded the capitalist state in Cuba as being a 'shadow' of a state. In any case, on neither part did they regard their positions on Cuba as final, not open to further discussion within the International Committee, nor did they attempt to make the 'Cuban question' the central touchstone for future political collaboration within the IC.

The use of Cuba as an 'ultimatum' came from the SWP leadership. And it was, and is, false for the SWP and Pabloites to claim that the SLL and OCI positions on the

character of the Cuban state led to a refusal to defend it against US imperialism - ie, a crossing of class lines to the political support or toleration of attempts at invasion or subversion by the US.

The struggle of the SWP was, for the leadership of the SLL, one of the main impulses for the study of, and subsequent emphasis on, the philosophical ideas of dialectical materialism and their relation to the Hegelian philosophy. One of Hansen's main targets in *Cuba - The Acid Test* is a series of articles in *Labour Review* (theoretical journal of the SLL changed into the theoretical journal of the IC in 1963, and renamed as the present *Fourth International*) during 1962. The articles, by Cliff Slaughter, take the form of an extended review of Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* (*Collected Works*, Vol.38) containing an extended defence of dialectical materialism against empiricism and its worship of 'accomplished facts'.

Part of this is an attack on those - such as the Pabloites - who in effect liquidate the historical need for Trotskyist parties behind the 'recognition' that capitalism can be overthrown by petty-bourgeois formations such as Castro's July 26th movement. Without being explicit about it, the articles are also quite clearly an attack on the positions of the SWP leadership, and this is why they replied to them so vitriolically.

This attention to the study and development of the philosophical fundamentals of dialectical materialism has been a central element for the SLL and subsequently the WRP leadership since that time. It represented a considerable strengthening of the movement against the Pabloites, and it is true to say that neither the Pabloites nor the SWP have been able to take up the questions of method raised, and the subsequent attempts at 'philosophical' polemic by the SWP leadership - principally George Novack, allegedly a supporter of Pablo in 1953, although in fact he stayed with the SWP majority - have veered more and more in the direction of apologetics for pragmatism and eclecticism. (25).

IMPETUS

The fact that questions of Marxist philosophy have subsequently been divorced, by the WRP leadership, from the problems of class struggle, the fight for the Transitional Programme and to build the party, and the problems of concrete political analysis, should not be allowed to disguise the theoretical and political impetus given, especially to the British section, by the 'turn to philosophy' in the early 1960s. It was, for example, an essential element in training an entire new cadre in Marxism in the course of the work in and around the Labour Party Young Socialists up to the expulsions of 1964.

But, at the same time, this gain like all advances had a one-sided and uneven character. What the SLL and OCI leaderships were not able to do, in the course of the break with the SWP leadership, was to go back and reassess the theoretical problems involved in the Third World Congress, the break with Pablo, and the analysis of the Chinese revolution. These were not problems which immediately presented themselves as ones of Marxist method, or could be tackled *only* by defence of the philosophical bases of Marxism; nor were they simply those of liquidationism versus the struggle for, Trotskyist parties.

Still less were they tactical or episodic. What was placed before the International Committee was the need for a re-opening of the post-war discussion on Stalinism and the formation of the new workers' states. It made no sense to say that accepting *Cuba* as a workers' state undermined the whole basis of Trotskyism, since the Cuban revolution had been made by a political formation that was far from Trotskyist, if one simply, 'empirically' accepted that Eastern Europe and China had become workers' states under the domination of Stalinism.

Yet, although the SLL leadership in 1961-63 insisted on the need to return to a full discussion of the bases of the 1953 split, they were in practice not able to take up the theoretical questions involved - namely what was specifically new in the post-war world in the part played by bureaucratic leaderships in the relation between imperialism and the working class.

It is true that the SLL leadership, already in 1957, speaks in correspondence with Cannon of 'the double-talk of the 3rd Congress' (26), but in the main public document against the Pabloites of that year the 'double-talk' is ascribed only to Pablo's documents of 1953. And at no point, from then to now, have they been able to return to make any sort of overall reassessment of the positions of the Third Congress.

CONCLUDED IN NEXT EDITION

8. *Theses on the American Revolution* in Cannon *The Coming American Revolution*, SWP, 1947.
9. Healy, in the leadership of the British section, was in a minority supporting Cannon in this perspective in the immediate post-war period.
10. See, eg. John G. Wright *Welfare State and Depression*, in *FI*, June 1949.
11. See R. Black *Stalinism in Britain* for this (p.231) and other incidents of the period.
12. Resolutions of the Second World Congress in *FI*, July 1948.
13. Resolution on the Class Character of Eastern Europe in *Class, Party and State* SWP, p.55.
14. See, eg. Tom Kerry *The Wohlforth Way - A Methodological Mutation*, in *SWP Internal Bulletin*, Vol.24, No.17 (1963)
15. See *Quatrieme Internationale*.
16. See *Class, Party and State*, p.55.
17. See *International Information Bulletin*, March 1951. There is a most striking parallel between the way in which Pablo revised the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism in relation to Tito, and the WRP's very similar assessment of the Vietnamese Stalinist leadership following the fall of Saigon. See articles on the Vietnamese Revolution by S. Johns in *Workers Press* Aug. 5,6,7 and 8th. 1975.
18. See *IIB*, April 1951 (reprinted in *Towards a History of the FI*)
19. See *Trotskyism v Revisionism*, Vol. 1, p.298.
20. See *Trotskyism v Revisionism*, vol.2, p.86f & 206f.
21. See *Trotskyism v Revisionism* vol 3, pp 21-45.
22. See *Towards a History of the FI*, vols 3&4.
23. See *Introductory Note*, by Fred Feldman.
24. In *Trotskyism v Revisionism*, vol 4, pp 20-71
25. See his articles of 1971-3, reprinted in *Healyite Revision of Dialectical Materialism, "Marxism v Ultraleftism"*, Section xix, SWP, 1974.
26. See *Letter from Healy to Cannon*, 10th May, 1957, in *Trotskyism v Revisionism*, vol 3 p 32.