

WSL left wing, London Spartacist Group fuse

The rebirth of British Trotskyism

Spartacist League founded

When 23 supporters of the Trotskyist Faction (TF) walked out of the Workers Socialist League (WSL) at the WSL's 18-19 February second annual conference they left declaring their opposition to the central leadership's 'Pabloite attachment to the Labour Party, their capitulationist attitude to nationalism, and in particular Irish nationalism, their all-pervading economism and minimalism and their parochialism' (TF statement, see p. 7). Its aim, said the TF, was to struggle for a British section of a recreated Fourth International. The first step toward this goal was the rapid merger of forces with the London Spartacist Group (LSG), at a conference over the 4-5 March weekend, to form the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) as a sympathising organisation of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt).

This fusion is one of the largest and most important in the 15-year history of the Spartacist tendency. The new organisation already has close on 50 members and a presence both in London and the Midlands. By its comprehensive Leninist programme and clear internationalist perspectives the SL/B is exercising a strong attraction on remaining dissident elements inside the WSL. The same will soon prove true as well toward the numerous small centrist organisations, which will find in the Spartacist League a solidly programmatically based unity—in striking contrast to the short-lived, politically promiscuous unnatural couplings which pass for fusions in the highly fragmented British Trotskyoid milieu.

The factional struggle in the WSL and the fusion with the TF also vindicate in a powerful manner the iSt's policy of revolutionary regroupment. Recognising that many valuable militants are presently to be found in various pseudo-revolutionary organisations, we have fought to regroup the best of these potential cadres for the nucleus of an international vanguard party. It was essentially a process of splits and fusions, both in the U.S. and internationally, that enabled the Spartacist League/U.S. to break out of the national isolation imposed by our expulsion from Gerry Healy's 1966 International Committee (IC) conference. But for the WSL leadership around Alan Thornett any polemical combat within the left is 'petty-bourgeois'; consequently the WSL has been unable to develop any coherent perspective for international work at all.

The goal of our regroupment policy has always been to decisively split the cadre of centrist organisations, in the first instance the Pabloist pretenders to Trotskyism who are the principal obstacle to reorganising the Fourth



Singing the 'Internationale' at the Spartacist League founding conference.

Spartacist Britain

International. This is exactly what has happened in the WSL. Just over four years ago *Workers Vanguard* sent a reporter to cover the British miners strike. At that time the Spartacist tendency had just made its first isolated recruits in Europe. Only at the end of 1975 were we able to establish a Spartacist group in London, and it took nearly two years of dogged propagandistic activity to achieve the breakthrough represented by the fusion with the Trotskyist Faction. But today sections of the iSt outside the U.S. make up over one-third of the total membership of the tendency internationally.

Bob Pennington, a leader of the International Marxist Group (IMG—British affiliate of the so-called United Secretariat of the Fourth International [USec]), remarked last autumn that those who proclaim themselves Trotskyists will have to choose between two 'mainstreams', the USec and the iSt. By this he undoubtedly meant to suggest that the 're-united' USec would be 'where the action is'. But the WSL split and subsequent formation of the SL/B, establishing the iSt as a direct organisational competitor with the USec on the British terrain, has certainly given no comfort to Pennington et al. It indicates that there are those on the British 'far left' who have had enough of chasing after whatever is popular and want to get on with the business of constructing a democratic-centralist, authentically Trotskyist International.

As for the workerist WSL, in its main reply to the TF documents the Thornett group initially referred to the oppositionists as 'a small part of our movement'. From the tone of their subsequent public comments it is evident that they were surprised that nearly two dozen members took the step of walking out of the Workers Socialist League. The WSL will not easily recover from the loss of two National Committee members, three members of the *Socialist Press* editorial board, three out of four members of its Irish Commission, and several regional and local organisers. With the loss of one fifth of its active membership, the WSL reverts back to its original regional limitations—the celebrated car fraction at British Leyland's Cowley plant in Oxford, the London grouping and a handful of shaky members in Yorkshire.

Moreover, Thornett's response to the challenge presented by the Trotskyist Faction was positively pathetic, both before and after the split. Perhaps sensing that he is at his weakest debating politics, Thornett simply waved his Cowley credentials as a talisman to ward off all attacks. In his hour-and-a-half opening remarks to the WSL conference he attended only briefly to the programmatic issues which were about to rip 20 percent of the participants away from him. His allegation that the TF members were only interested in 'exciting politics' was hardly an indictment in view of the WSL's

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SL founding conference document

Tasks in Britain



Founding conference of the Spartacist League.

Spartacist Britain

I. The State of the Spartacist League at its Foundation

The fusion of the Trotskyist Faction, formerly of the Workers Socialist League, with the international Spartacist tendency is a dramatic confirmation of the gains which can be made by a revolutionary grouping seeking to form a pole of attraction in opposition to revisionism and confirms the correctness of the fighting propaganda perspective as the road to the construction of the Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard internationally. This is principled regroupment—in stark contrast to the manoeuvrist pretensions of such charlatans as the International Marxist Group, the International-Communist League and the Workers Socialist League.

The winning of a section of the WSL to the principled Trotskyist politics of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) is the result of political attention given to Britain from the time of the emergence of the tendency in political conflict with the Healy leadership of the International Committee, through the very modest intervention into the British Trotskyoid left that the Spartacist tendency was capable of in the late 1960's and early 1970's, to the establishment of the London Spartacist Group in mid-1975 and its work since then. The London Spartacist Group's small size and its overwhelmingly externally developed membership, together with its central responsibility to recruit an indigenous cadre grouping, led it to correctly concentrate its resources very heavily on an orientation in its public intervention, both oral and literary, and in its contact work, towards the cadre of the ostensibly Trotskyist centrist organisations. The particular programmatic questions brought to the fore by the conflict with the British centrists were the iSt's intransigent opposition to Labourism (currently most sharply expressed by our opposition to extending critical support to the Labour Party during the Social Contract or the Liberal-Labour coalition) and the iSt's equally implacable opposition to nationalism (most forcefully presented in this country by our uniquely proletarian revolutionary position on Ireland). Furthermore, the very composition of the group and the American newspaper, *Workers Vanguard*, that it sold were a challenge to the narrow parochialism of the British left, while its highly propagandistic mode of political work was a challenge to the prevailing subordination of programmatic considerations to opportunism, cliquism, and manoeuvrism. As we grow in Britain we will seek with relish, as revolutionaries and internationalists, to find new ways of challenging opportunism and parochialism.

The leadership core of the Trotskyist Faction emerged late last year out of a grouping recruited two years before to the WSL from the Revolutionary Communist Group. A substantial part of the ex-RCG grouping, coming to a realisation that the programme of the WSL fell short of the requirements of proletarian revolution, and responding to *Workers Vanguard* and the propaganda of the London Spartacist Group, adopted programmatic positions parallel to those of the iSt, especially on the Labour Party, Ireland and the rebirth of the Fourth

International. However, in the process, a section of this leftward moving group, through a mixture of cliquism and appetite for influence in the WSL leadership, drew back from the struggle, split from the comrades who were to become the nucleus of the Trotskyist Faction, and zig-zagged back in a rightward direction supporting the leadership of the WSL against the Trotskyist Faction.

The Trotskyist Faction leadership was enriched in its later period by the acquisition of cadres with previous experience in the Socialist Labour League/Workers Revolutionary Party, but due to the rapid pace of the fight, to the geographical dispersal of the membership of the Trotskyist Faction, to the lack of experience of the central comrades in even deformed versions of Leninist modes of struggle, and to the inability of the WSL's leadership to wage a fight which substantially tested those central comrades, the Trotskyist Faction was never fully able to develop a real collective leadership. The Trotskyist Faction nevertheless carried out an effective and highly programmatic fight in the WSL, winning to the revolutionary programme some fine human material, and administering a substantial defeat to the centrist WSL.

The fusion of the London Spartacist Group and the Trotskyist Faction not only doubles the iSt's forces in Britain, but more importantly brings with it a crucial component of experienced cadres with considerable histories and roots in the British left, making possible and urgent the formation of a British sympathising section of the iSt. Both the Trotskyist Faction, and for a much longer period the London Spartacist Group, have been fighting for the revolutionary programme in the methods appropriate to their situation and resources, but this fusion represents in different ways a complete transformation for each: the Trotskyist Faction moves from a fight solely waged to win healthy elements of the WSL's cadre, to public propaganda; the London Spartacist Group moves from the restricted propaganda necessary for a minute organisation of its composition to the more flexible fighting propaganda tactics possible for a growing organisation of over forty comrades which has established some ground for itself, however marginally, on the national political terrain. The foundation of the Spartacist League (British sympathising section of the international Spartacist tendency) is a declaration of our determination to transcend qualitatively the limitations of our predecessors, to establish a fighting propaganda group, to stabilise our gains, and to go on to build the nucleus of the British vanguard party—a vanguard party to lead the proletariat in the seizure of state power.

While the new Spartacist League has the *forces* necessary for the tasks of a fighting propaganda group, its sudden emergence as a result of the fusion between two small organisations of necessarily limited, if very different, experience, renders the organisation somewhat artificial and its forces *ill-prepared for the tasks*. We enter this period without a collective leadership, without a press or the editorial capacity to produce one, without trade-union work, with only the beginnings of an apparatus, with limited past public activity, and with only one, weak, party fraction. There must be a struggle to overcome all these weaknesses in the next period, a process which will be far from automatic. Only our sound basis for existence in the programme of the iSt and our political subordination to the international tendency makes the projection of such a transformation possible, together with the support of the tendency politically and materially and its contributions of personnel and technical aid. The development of a British section has been a main intention of the tendency for a decade, converted to a priority as soon as the

human material became available. And it remains a main priority internationally.

II. The Stabilisation of the SL/B

a. *Collective Leadership and the Party*

The task of the Spartacist League in the next period is to forge a genuine leadership collective which integrates the experience of the Trotskyist Faction in Britain with the international experience of the iSt. Such a task cannot be accomplished in the abstract but only in the course of the struggle to push the Spartacist League forward. The process of stabilising the British section presents difficulties which did not face other sections of the iSt. In the past, sections of the iSt have been able to develop leading collectives and integrate their memberships through a process of linear growth punctuated by struggles which enabled the further transformation of the organisation through internal struggles (Ellens-Turner and Cunningham-Treiger in the SL/U.S. and the Gager fight in the SL/ANZ). Although the gains of those previous experiences, and the consequent existence now of an authoritative international leadership collective and a regular English-language press gives us special advantages, the Spartacist League in Britain is faced with the special difficulties of forging a stable leadership *as part of* a breakthrough.

The discipline of the party and the dedication and organisational loyalty of its membership flow from its political programme, from the understanding that the party and the programme of which it is the only full embodiment, represent the only hope for the proletariat and mankind. As Trotsky wrote of Spain, 'For a successful solution of all these tasks, three conditions are required: a party, once more a party, and again a party.' The ability of the leadership to direct the organisation flows from the authority that it wins in the course of the fight for the party's programme. To integrate the Trotskyist Faction and create a collective leadership means to win the genuine Bolshevik, programmatically based discipline which is desired by all communists.

b. *Press Policy*

We must provide a press in Britain which reflects the political tasks and the organisational strength of the Spartacist League. This must be the interventionist press of a fighting propaganda group; it must be polemical, taking up the inadequacies and betrayals of our opponents; it must deal with the broad theoretical questions of the workers movement internationally; it must show how the class struggle can be intersected by the communist vanguard and the way forward for particular struggles.

The central organ of the Spartacist League will be a tabloid newspaper appearing irregularly at first but moving rapidly to monthly frequency... the constant and careful attention of the whole organisation, particularly its central leadership is necessary if the press is to do its job as the central political voice and organising tool of our organisation.

We must expand our sales on the street, at factories, at universities and polytechnics, and at special meeting points such as pubs inhabited by, or films attended by the left. We must push to rapidly expand our sub base beyond the meagre one which currently exists for *WV*. An early subscription drive will be a vehicle by which we can capitalise on the impact of the fusion.

Besides the paper, we project the publication gradually of a series of mimeographed *Trotskyist Bulletins* which collect together materials which relate to the history of the development of the Spartacist League, such as the documents of the Trotskyist Faction. We plan also occasional pamphlets which collect together materials on

SPARTACIST BRITAIN

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topics of special interest which have appeared before in the publications of the iSt (e.g., articles on Ireland). Leaflets, as tools for intervention into particular political events, will also be produced from time to time, according to our needs and subordinate to the development of the paper.

c. Apparatus

Prior to the fusion the London Spartacist Group had created a fairly professional apparatus, roughly commensurate with its needs. . . . But our tasks are now suddenly transformed and we must build and stabilise an apparatus to cover the whole range of necessary functions required for a much larger organisation, and for the regular production and distribution of a press. We must make a division of labour between national and branch functions, and build and maintain a functioning central office.

d. Money, skills and jobs

... The creation of a Work for a Higher Income Programme is vital to the perspective of financial self-sufficiency both as a way of financing the Spartacist League in Britain and as a way of stabilising our comrades. We must struggle to upgrade their income, employment and living situations.

The acquiring of skills, while integral to organisational functioning, can also enable comrades to earn more both for themselves and for the party. It can make them mobile and can also assist in our eventual perspective of systematic industrial implantation.

e. Branches

The stabilisation of the Spartacist League requires the fullest integration of the comrades of the Trotskyist Faction into the iSt. This will require frequent national gatherings and concentration of our forces into... branches large enough to allow the comrades to have a well-rounded political life. We reject the quasi-cell structure of the WSL, and we will struggle against any slide towards a geographically dispersed membership, which would be a capitulation to the Menshevik chumminess and softness of the British left. We can rely on no one but ourselves to train, integrate and stabilise the Spartacist League.

Our primary initial task is to cohere a leadership in our... branches capable of directing the work in their areas. The branch executives are bodies elected by and subordinate to the branch. Each branch will elect an organiser responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the comrades, and may elect a political chairman protected from day-to-day organisational tasks and responsible for the overall political guidance of the branch's work.

London: The political centre of the British Isles is London. Without a functioning branch in London, we would be at best peripheral to the political life of Britain. At the same time, as in all national centres, the London branch will carry more than the burden of involvement in local activities. It will play an essential role in the functioning of our centre and will have to be heavily involved in preparing for national interventions since many of these take place in London.

Birmingham: Birmingham is the second largest population centre in Britain and a key industrial centre, and to be a real national organisation it would be necessary to have a branch there. While in some respects it is premature to have a... branch [there], the Trotskyist Faction's roots in Birmingham and the size of our forces make it possible, though without an authoritative cadre with iSt experience to form a political axis with the Trotskyist Faction-originating political chairman it will need extremely careful monitoring and advice from the centre, giving the branch the character of an organising committee rather than a local committee. While less politically active than London, the Midlands offers enough of a political life to give opportunities for the Spartacist League through recruitment and impact on the ostensibly revolutionary organisations. It is desirable that we seek an industrial implantation in the Midlands so as to provide an axis for the branch's work.

... We should... seek to use [other] opportunities open to us. This can best be done through regional tours. A priority for this must be in the north and in particular Scotland..

III. Areas of Work for the Spartacist League

a. Industrial Work

We should aggressively seek opportunities to directly intersect the struggles of the industrial proletariat. When important industrial disputes on the order of last year's firemen's strike and Grunwicks dispute erupt we should seek opportunities to intervene. Sales at factory gates and strikes are particularly useful. When the forces and leadership are available, we should seek in the next period to implant comrades in industry to start building the basis for an initial trade-union fraction, recognising that it will be some time after implantation before any fraction can start doing political work in its factory.

Over the years the car workers in Britain have been one of the most consistently militant sections of the industrial workforce and is a sector in which our most immediate competitors are well represented. This situation coupled with our previous international experience makes the car industry a primary target for implantation, although further investigation will be

necessary before making decisions on which factories and unions in this industry will be our primary targets.

b. The Labour Party

Despite the fact that the current coalition suppresses the contradiction between the bourgeois leadership and proletarian base of the Labour Party, it does not eliminate it. Future mobilisations of the working class will flow at least in part through the Labour Party and in different circumstances we will want to work inside it, so most comrades will join the Labour Party with a view to work at a later time.

c. The Women's Movement

The London Spartacist Group's work in the feminist milieu has provided useful information and experience of our opponents and has been our first attempt at fraction work in Britain. The women's fraction has thus provided training for our comrades. We seek to continue the gradual expansion of this work.

Independent of the concrete gains which have been made, the defence of the Bolshevik position on work among women is an essential part of programmatic regroupment.

d. Student Work

The student movement is capable of providing many talented individuals for the party. We must therefore try to tap this source. To date the work of the London Spartacist Group has consisted of sales at the London School of Economics (LSE) and has been restricted to functioning from the outside. We are now able to establish a fraction at LSE and do effective work against the ostensibly Trotskyist organisations and make contacts among Maoist-oriented foreign students. In Birmingham we should seek to concentrate our student comrades on one of the several campuses and establish a fraction to do work there.

e. International Work

Since we are located at the centre of a former empire, we will be in a position to recruit comrades from a wide variety of nationalities. While we must seek to take advantage of the genuine opportunities which present themselves to the Spartacist League, we must be aware that international work flows through the SL/B, and in all such work we are under the scrutiny and direct supervision of the international secretariat of the iSt.

Work in new countries inevitably places new and considerable strains on the resources of the tendency. We will not be forced into new areas of work by accidents of the national origins of our raw recruits, nor by individual whims. We are an international tendency, and our priorities for work in new countries must be planned internationally, taking into account not only the quantity of our resources measured in an undifferentiated way, but the political experience of the recruits we make from new areas of the world, and also special factors such as the international leadership's capacity in the necessary languages, extraordinary security requirements for work in particular countries, and so on.

Where we recruit comrades of relative inexperience from areas where we do not already have sections, our priority must be to integrate and train them, combined perhaps in some cases with a very modest translation perspective designed to service their contacts.

f. Work on the Irish Question

The Irish question is central to the work of revolutionaries in Britain. The iSt's position is unique in counterposing a class-struggle position to the petty-bourgeois nationalism which is tailed by the British and Irish left. We must seek to capitalise on this position, using it as a major axis for regroupment in Britain.

To work effectively in Ireland would require a highly trained and professional cadre. In the coming period, we will seek to develop such a cadre through work around the Irish question in Britain, but we do not seek work in Ireland itself. Precipitous attempts to work in Ireland without the proper cadre component would lead to the

political (if not physical) liquidation of the comrades involved. Initially our attempts to do work around the Irish question must consist of developing, pushing and strengthening our line, gathering additional information and seeking opportunities to intervene against our opponents. This work will have mainly the character of opponent work, but for its future progress it is best organised as a commission of the central committee.

g. Archives

Documentary materials relating to the early Communist Party of Great Britain and the entire history of British Trotskyism are important to our gaining an understanding of the national milieu in which we operate. Additionally this material can help us retrieve some of the past experience of our movement. We must continue to pursue the gathering of appropriate documentary material on British Trotskyism (public press, internal materials, and interviews).

h. The Question of Fascism

The threat of fascism is palpable in Britain. The particularly acute state of capitalist decay (the demise of the British empire combining with an indefinite prospect of sharp conjunctural crises) presents an outlook where, more closely than in, for example, America or West Germany, there are only two stable solutions: the rule of the working class or the rule of the likes of the National Front.

Much of the activity of the left in Britain has centred around 'anti-fascist work'. For us the fascist threat must be fought and smashed through the mobilisation of the mass organisations of the working class. The rest of the left has typically offered up an alternation between legalist, Labourite appeals to the capitalist state and open popular frontism (e.g., the Anti-Nazi League), and substitutionist brawls (along the lines of Red Lion Square). The fight against these companion roads to suicide will provide numerous opportunities for us to intersect our opponents and establish ourselves as a real tendency with roots in the British class struggle.

i. Opponent Work

The expansion of propagandist interventions against our competitors on the left that will accompany the stabilisation of the Spartacist League as a fighting propaganda group serves to emphasise that our central party-building strategy for this coming period will not be qualitatively different from the London Spartacist Group's—we aim to accumulate cadre through winning subjective revolutionaries from the ostensibly revolutionary organisations.

The impact of the split in the WSL and the fusion of the Trotskyist Faction with the iSt is likely to accelerate the process of polarisation which has begun among self-styled Trotskyists in Britain. As IMG leader Bob Pennington noted, these organisations will have to decide on which mainstream to be part of: the United Secretariat's or the iSt's. Should this polarisation materialise rapidly rather than over a prolonged period, it will require that we be much more meticulous in our testing out of potential recruits and/or groupings which move in our direction. It is therefore crucially important that we emphasise those of our positions which go against the grain of backward qualities in the British left-wing political life. Our most important opponents are within the Trotskyoid milieu....

IV. Conclusion

We set ourselves these tasks confident that the building of the Spartacist League in Britain is the only road to the resolution of the crisis of leadership in the working class. Our determination to fight for the proletarian revolution internationally expresses the knowledge that our programme is the last hope of mankind.

FORWARD TO THE BRITISH SECTION OF THE REBORN FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

[Adopted unanimously at the Founding Conference of the Spartacist League/Britain, 5 March 1978.]

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For a Trotskyist perspective in Turkey!

'This is not a "perspectives document" since perspectives for the work cannot be drawn up in the abstract in London but must be developed in the context of the living struggles in Turkey.' (*Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 6, p. 1)

'By these few words, the international character of socialism as a scientific doctrine and as a revolutionary movement is completely refuted. If socialists (communists) of one country are incapable, incompetent, and consequently have no right to decide the vital questions of the struggle of socialists (communists) in other countries, the proletarian International loses all rights and possibilities of existence.' (Trotsky, *Writings 1933-34*, p. 33)

The work carried out by the comrades in Turkey is based on their experiences in working with the WSL in

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Britain. The WSL leadership has inspired and 'guided' the work in Turkey; consequently this must be seen as a test of the WSL's politics and programme. This hostility to the struggle for programmatic clarity coupled with a familiar posture of doing 'mass work' [has] led to what must be called the crisis of the Turkish work. We seek to provide the political basis for a complete reorientation of this work while recognising that this cannot be accomplished without a radical reorientation of the WSL itself. We agree when the leadership says that 'The problems of this work are the problems of the WSL' (*Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 6, p. 1).

On the History of the Turkish Work

The WSL's Turkish work was first developed when some comrades went to Turkey, where they had discussions with the leadership of the sympathising group of the United Secretariat there—the KOZ. The comrades then met four people in Istanbul who were linked to a small group of people who were close to the KOZ (Turkish Mandelites) and managed to have several meetings to discuss politics with these people. At this point Comrade H. intervened and suggested that the four people whom we met at first should begin to work with us. Contact with KOZ sympathisers was then dropped. What made this break very destructive and sectarian was that it was *not* made on the basis of political differences—even the people who were eventually recruited were not won to our political positions. And since no attempt was made to recruit these comrades *politically*, some have subsequently become demoralised and have left the group.

With the breaking off of contact with the KOZ sympathisers, the leadership then took up 'mass work' as

the main orientation of the group. This was in reality a liquidation of potential cadres into a series of stupid and adventuristic actions. One of the first of these actions is described in the leadership's document as follows: '... we agreed [to] a joint one-day mobilisation around the polling stations, so we would fight along with the workers to defend democratic right' (p. 8). But what was this 'mobilisation'? And how many workers were we fighting 'along with'? In a letter written on 7 June '77 Comrade H. answers these questions:

'Though it was late, some comrades from this group and us organised a meeting and elected a committee to mobilise 20 comrades for defence of the polls and against violence. Some [special defence measures were] involved in the mobilisation. Though it was very weak it was useful for some youth comrades. But because of lack of practice inside the factories, the defence had not been really fought as a workers defence.'

It should be noted that with this isolated activity we managed to bypass completely the mobilisation of DISK, the main trade-union federation, to defend the polls.

Another example of WSL 'mass work' in Turkey is described in the document produced by the leadership:

'When the comrades got jobs in another small factory, we were able to lead (!) another (!) unionisation fight. Again we fought the DISK bureaucracy, and we won the support of the workers we previously organised, who helped with pickets and money-raising. But the strike was isolated, was broken, and *all the strikers were sacked. Though the battle was lost, our comrades were developed and new contacts won.*' [our emphasis] (*Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 6, p. 9)

We told these very young workers at a small factory that they should strike for union recognition. We had very little understanding of the Turkish trade-union movement and we had no means of giving a lead to such a strike beyond our experience with the WSL in Britain. We were totally ill-prepared to give even good trade-union leadership to back up our advice to these workers.

Besides the idiotic gloating over our small organisational gains *at the expense of workers being sacked*, we blamed the workers for the failure of the strike! In a letter to Comrade F., Comrade H. wrote:

'The biggest reason for this [the defeat of the strike] is not because we are wrong and because of our method of work but it is because the laws are against us, even in such a struggle, and that a very small group of workers do not have the power to change these laws. *The other mistake made which is not our mistake is that it was the workers' militancy, it was their going out early....* The struggle is defeated but as the method of the Transitional Programme signifies, we gained, first, the development of our own comrades, and, second, we had the opportunity to develop a couple of militant workers there!' 23 Aug. '77 [our translation and our emphasis]

So the crisis of leadership is not the problem when we are involved: we blame the workers for their defeats.

But the dizziness with success has not lasted long.

Posing the crisis of the Turkish group as disagreements on centralisation, and 'secret visits' by an ex-comrade, the leadership's document states that these things:

'... had political effects on one comrade in Istanbul and on a few comrades in Ankara. The comrade in Istanbul resigned from the group.

'At the last meeting we had in Ankara, comrades agreed to act again as a centralised group. But since then we have not received detailed information about the situation in Ankara.' (*Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 6, p. 9)

The truth is that, by failing to make political clarification the most important job for our Turkish comrades, the WSL has wasted its opportunities in Turkey. The WSL Turkish group is in a mess, and it is doubtful if its membership supports the WSL anymore. The crisis of the Turkish group and the demoralisation expressed by the above statement are linked to two causes: first, the cliquish (non-programmatic) basis on which the group has been built and, secondly, the stupid adventurism which could only discredit us in the eyes of any serious militants.

For a Trotskyist Propaganda Orientation

The only way in which the basis for a real Trotskyist party can be established is through abandoning all pretences of already acting as a mass party and concentrating on recruiting and training cadres who will form a future leadership. This task, primarily one of propaganda for Trotskyism, also involves an orientation towards discussion, debate and polemics against other supposedly 'revolutionary' groups—most importantly the false 'Trotskyists' of the KOZ, which is approximately 20 times as large as we are. Not only are there many subjective revolutionaries in this organisation who *can* be won to genuine Trotskyism, but its very existence makes it additionally an important obstacle to the formation and growth of a revolutionary organisation. The struggle against the KOZ can also play a part in the struggle to smash the Pabloite revisionists internationally. To a lesser extent we must orient our propaganda work to the various other 'Marxist' formations—Maoist, Guevarist, 'anti-Stalinists' (especially in the Revolutionary Youth where many elements are interested in Trotskyism). Any other strategy—like the leadership's 'mass work'—can only amount to a liquidation of the fight for a revolutionary leadership in Turkey.

In the early days of the formation of the International Left Opposition, Trotsky projected exactly this course:

'Our strength at the given stage lies in a correct... revolutionary prognosis. These qualities we must present first of all to the proletarian vanguard. We act in the first place as *propagandists*. We are too weak to attempt to give answers to all questions, to intervene in all the specific conflicts, to formulate everywhere and in all places the slogans and the replies of the Left Opposition. The chase after such universality, with our weakness and the inexperience of many comrades, will often lead to too-hasty conclusions, to imprudent slogans, to wrong solutions. By false steps *in particulars* we will be the ones to compromise ourselves by preventing the workers from appreciating the *fundamental* qualities of the Left Opposition. I do not want in any way to say by this that we must stand aside from the real struggle of the working class. Nothing of the sort. The advanced workers can test the revolutionary advantages of the Left Opposition only by living experiences, but one must learn to select the most vital, the most burning, and the most principled questions and on these questions engage in combat without dispersing oneself in trifles and details. It is in this, it appears to me, that the fundamental role of the Left Opposition now lies.' (Trotsky, *Writings 1930-31*, p. 297)

The United Front Slogan in Turkey

One of the most serious political errors in the Turkish work has been the entirely false and incorrect usage of the 'united front' slogan. For revolutionaries the united front is a tactic which is useful in uniting the workers of various political tendencies for certain limited and concrete common actions (against the fascists for example) while at the same time providing an opportunity to expose the treachery and inconsistencies of the reformists and centrists to their followers.

Centrists attempt to use the slogan of the 'united front' to cover their own capitulation to the reformists—or as



Army attacks Turkish workers' May Day demonstration in Istanbul last year.

Milliyet

some kind of magical short cut to mass influence. They try to present common blocs for propaganda with the reformists (or other centrists) as an *alternative* to or a *first stage* of building a revolutionary party. The Leninist formula for a united front is to 'march separately—strike together' but the centrists always want to march *together* with the reformists under a common banner. This is exactly the strategy proposed by the leadership of the Turkish comrades of the WSL in *Enternasyonal* No. 5 (Sept.-Oct.-Nov. 1977).

'Such a [United] Front will approach the economic and political questions of the workers and labourers and be an alternative for power. The question is reduced to the establishment of a political and organisationally powerful combination where other wide labouring sections and members of the petty-bourgeoisie could have faith ...'

Or again in *Enternasyonal* No. 3 (July 1977): 'The struggle should be advanced to establish the United

class in Turkey as everywhere else is faced with two alternatives: socialism or barbarism (which might well take the form of fascism). The threat of fascism cannot be removed except through the victory of the socialist revolution—and that requires the leadership of a Trotskyist vanguard party.

The Question of the Labour Party in Turkey

Unlike Britain and other Western European countries, there are today no mass reformist workers' parties in Turkey. Both the Turkish Labour Party (TIP) and the pro-Moscow Turkish Communist Party (TKP) are very small organisations (not much bigger than Tony Cliff's SWP) with only a limited base in the unions. The party which does have a mass base in the unions (the RPP) is an out-and-out *bourgeois* party.

Thus a key task for revolutionaries in Turkey is to

nations to set up their own political state. We do not put forward this policy to strengthen the reactionary ideology of nationalism among the proletariat but to weaken it, and hence strengthen proletarian unity across national lines. Whether or not we call for the right of self-determination in a particular situation depends on a variety of factors. As Lenin notes in *The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*:

'The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small part* of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) world movement. In individual concrete cases the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected.' (*Collected Works*, Vol. 22)

In the following passage Lenin summed up the Bolshevik approach to national oppression and our hostility to nationalism:

'The awakening of the masses from feudal lethargy, and their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nation are progressive. Hence, it is the Marxists' *bounden* duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question. The task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the "positive" activity of the *bourgeoisie* striving to fortify nationalism. To throw off the feudal yoke, all national oppression, and all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat as a democratic force, and is certainly in the interests of the proletarian class struggle, which is obscured and retarded by bickering on the national question. But to go *beyond* these strictly limited and definite historical limits in helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie. There is a border-line here, which is often very slight and which the Bundists and Ukrainian nationalist-socialists completely lose sight of.' (*Critical Remarks on the National Question*, pp. 22-23)

For the Right of Self-Determination of the Kurdish People

The Kurdish people are an oppressed national minority who are divided among Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Soviet Union. The largest portion of the Kurds (about one quarter) live in Turkey. A correct position on the Kurdish question is central to the orientation of a revolutionary group in most of the countries in which the Kurdish people now reside.

Although there have been numerous uprisings by sections of the Kurdish people against various oppressors over the past century, what the Kurds as a people desire is by no means definitely determined. The various struggles of the Kurds over the past century give no clear indication as to whether they desire simple equality or regional autonomy within a given state or independence. The best known recent struggle of the nationalist Kurdish Democratic Party has been for regional autonomy *within* the state of Iraq. In a situation such as this where there is national oppression but in which the desire of the nationally oppressed people has not expressed itself clearly, we can only advance a solution which undermines national divisions among the proletariat of the region, i.e., the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination. This demand is negative—no forced solutions to the Kurdish question by the ruling bourgeoisies of the region—and leaves open the question of what the Kurds will decide—equal rights, regional autonomy or independence.

In taking up the Kurdish question in Turkey it is vital that Trotskyists ruthlessly expose the national chauvinist position of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP). In its attempts to tail the bourgeois RPP, the TKP essentially denies the right of the Kurds to self-determination and supports the 'right' of the Turkish bourgeoisie to continue to oppress the Kurds who live within the present frontiers of Turkey. The WSL leadership's position on the Kurdish question rejects the national chauvinism of the Stalinist TKP only to take up a *nationalist* programme.

The position of the leadership of the WSL Turkish group is unashamedly Bundist: 'The political task of Trotskyists in Kurdistan must consist of the fight for an independent party and [of the] fight to gain and preserve working-class political independence from the bourgeois nationalists.' While the vanguard party in Turkey may have special organisations for work among the Kurds, these will only reflect a division of labour within the party. This division of labour is simply to carry out the organisation and mobilisation of the Kurdish masses. We stand with Lenin *against* the segregation into separate parties of proletarians of different nations living within the borders of a single-state power:

'The Great-Russian and Ukrainian workers must work together, and, as long as they live in a single state, act in the closest organisational unity, and concert, towards a common or international culture of the proletarian movement, displaying absolute tolerance on the question of the language in which propaganda is conducted, and in the purely local or purely national *details* of that propaganda. This is the imperative demand of Marxism. All advocacy of segregation of the workers of one nation from those of another, all attacks upon Marxist "assimilation,"... is *bourgeois* nationalism, against which it is essential to wage a ruthless struggle.' (*Critical Remarks on the National Question*, pp. 20-21)

The leadership's document projects a programme for work among the Kurds which is a two-stage conception: 'Such a programme will focus on democratic demands



Miners strike in Askale, Turkey, October 1977.

Yeraltı Maden/İs Sendikası

Front with a *socialist* programme.' Such a proposal—for a strategic united front with the reformist and centrist traitors for socialism—is in reality an opportunist proposal to liquidate the revolutionary vanguard.

One of the results of the confusion introduced by the leadership over the question of the united front is that comrades logically wonder whether the revolutionary party could have united actions in which the mass-based bourgeois RPP might participate, without forming a popular front. If we were to accept the leadership's definition of a united front as a strategic front—a coalition with a common programme—the involvement of the RPP would make it a popular front. However, if we accept Lenin and Trotsky's definition of a united front as a temporary agreement for limited common actions within which the revolutionaries keep full freedom of criticism, it is clear that united actions at which the RPP appears do not constitute popular-front betrayals.

The Struggle Against Fascism

Today in Turkey, the existence and growth of the fascists pose a serious danger to the proletariat. The National Action Party freely uses its youth organisation to attack workers' organisations and individual militants. While we have at present only very limited forces in Turkey, it is necessary for us to advance a correct political programme for crushing the fascists. Our group is *not* capable of creating an independent defence organisation. The task is to fight to create such a body *within* the trade unions. While this policy is counterposed to the absurd and potentially disastrous adventurism connected with the defending of the polling stations by our group, it is likewise counterposed to the opportunist call for a strategic united front of the *existing* workers' organisations.

Trotsky's call for the CP to form a united front with the SPD in Germany cannot be separated from the Left Opposition's self-characterisation of itself as a *faction* of the Comintern. Therefore we do not call for a united front of the existing workers' organisations as an answer to the fascist threat. Such a strategy amounts to telling the workers to place their faith in a bloc of the Stalinist and social-democratic class-collaborationists. Trotskyists must never teach the workers to rely on the unity of the reformists—rather one of the reasons that we call on the reformists to engage in united-front actions (*with us*) is so that we can better expose their treachery and cowardice to their base. In a historical sense the working

struggle to break the workers from the RPP and for the creation of a mass workers' party as a means of building the class independence of the workers from the bourgeoisie. When we raise the call for such a party we must be clear that we are calling for a workers' party based on a revolutionary programme—the Transitional Programme. We have no interest in fighting for a Turkish version of Britain's reformist Labour Party. This is clearly Trotsky's position in his discussions on the programme for a Labour Party in the United States: 'We must say to the Stalinists, Lovestonites, etc., "We are in favour of a revolutionary party. You are doing everything to make it reformist!" But we always point to our program. And we propose our program of transitional demands.' ('How to Fight for a Labor Party in the US', *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, p. 124)

Only in two early issues of *Socialist Press* has the WSL called for building a Labour Party in Turkey, but in its Turkish language material the WSL's Turkish group has never raised this slogan. Instead the policy of the leadership has been to offer support to the tiny ultra-reformist Turkish Labour Party (TIP). At the time of the last elections the TIP tried desperately to make an electoral bloc with the much larger bourgeois RPP. Only when the RPP refused the offer did the TIP stand candidates, and then they ran on a programme of class-collaborationism—to try to force the RPP to form a popular front with the TIP and other small parties of the left. Despite the clear popular frontist basis of the TIP campaign our group shamelessly called for workers to vote for these traitors and even raised the opportunist and ridiculous call for the class-collaborationist TIP to fight for a revolutionary programme! The reformist 'tactic' (which amounts to trying to build illusions among the masses about the TIP) is clearly copied from the WSL's call to 'Make the Lefts Fight', and the WSL's call for votes to Labour despite its coalition with the Liberals.

We call for a break from capitulation to the tiny group of class-collaborationist social-democrats in the TIP and for taking up the call for the political independence of the Turkish workers—for a Labour Party based on the Transitional Programme in Turkey!

For the Leninist Position on the National Question

Leninists uphold the basic democratic principle of the equality of nations and therefore recognise the right of all nations to self-determination—i.e., the right of all

Trotskyism...

(continued from page 1)

apolitical glorification of the 'daily grind'. And the failure of the majority to present any political perspective certainly contributed to the fact that a relatively large number of the TF supporters were younger rank-and-filers. Rarely has a centrist leadership presided over the coming apart of its organisation so meekly.

The WSL from Womb to...

Prior to the split of the Trotskyist Faction the WSL was already an organisation in deep trouble, its haphazard 'international work' come to naught and its domestic prospects cloudy at best. As the TF stated in its founding document:

'The WSL is in chaos. It has no clear idea of its tasks or direction....'

'This situation has a political origin—to put it bluntly the movement as yet lacks any programmatic basis for existence as a distinct political tendency. Every political tendency from Trotskyism to reformism is represented on the NC [National Committee] and among the membership.' ('In Defence of the Revolutionary Programme' [INDORP], [WSL] Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin No. 8, February 1978)

Yet only three years ago Healy's expulsion of the Thornett grouping from his Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) made a big splash among ostensible Trotskyists throughout the world. Thornett's orthodox-sounding defence of the Transitional Programme, his well-publicised industrial militancy and opposition to Healy's sectarian practices promised to be an attractive combination. What brought about his demise?

In the mid-1960's a large part of the leadership of the shop stewards committee at the Cowley assembly plant (then Morris Motors), including Alan Thornett who had been a Communist Party trade unionist, were personally recruited by Gerry Healy to the Socialist Labour League (SLL—predecessor of the WRP). 'The Cowley Fraction' was Healy's pride and joy and the major vehicle for the expression of his deformed brand of Trotskyism in the labour movement. But the first time Thornett crossed his godfather, Healy responded with vicious Mafia tactics, including physical intimidation.

The Thornett group, including the Cowley fraction, was summarily expelled in December 1974 and a few months later became the core of the Workers Socialist League. The iSt assessed the split tentatively at the time:

'At present the WSL is most clearly defined negatively.... While its future programmatic course is not definitely predictable, the WSL's failure to develop the internal struggle against Healy much beyond the democracy issue, and its rejection of Healyite "ultra-leftism" while maintaining some of the most rightist-revisionist aspects of the SLL/WRP, would seem to define the WSL as a split to the right from a badly deformed and characteristically English-centered version of fake "Trotskyism".' ('After Healy, What? WSL Adrift', *WV* No. 69, 23 May 1975)

The Trotskyist Faction, writing three years later, confirms this diagnosis: 'The WSL's break from Healyite maximalism was, in the final analysis, a break towards economism and minimalism' (INDORP).

While still inside the WRP, Thornett's opposition (centred in Oxford) had linked up with another dissident clot in London at whose head stood Alan Clinton. Clinton was noteworthy for his rightist grumblings at the WRP's decision to stand candidates against Labour during the 1974 general elections, while Thornett was more interested in resurrecting the transitional demand of workers control of production. The politically heterogeneous lash-up between Clinton and Thornett was an early expression of indifference to programme which in the WSL was later to harden into purposeful confusionism.

The combination of the glamour of an influential, although localised, industrial fraction and its claim to defend orthodox Trotskyism attracted to the WSL in its early period a series of leftward-moving groups. The most important source for these regroupments came from former members of Tony Cliff's International Socialists (I.S.—now Socialist Workers Party [SWP]) who were breaking from the I.S.'s social-democratic workerism in the direction of Trotskyism. The majority of these elements—out of which was to crystallise the core of the later Trotskyist Faction—passed briefly through the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG).

The RCG at its formation in mid-1974 had also declaimed loudly on the importance of programme. The initial components of this group originated in the Revolutionary Opposition, expelled from the I.S. in 1973, and had seen at first hand the consequences of a mindless worship of spontaneity which produced an organisation whose net caught everything and held nothing. They were joined in the first months of 1975 by nine members of the heterogeneous Left Opposition (also formerly of the I.S.), which had split in four directions in December 1974. Iconoclastically dismissing all past struggles to construct the Fourth International, the RCG under its guru David Yaffe was principally an academic debating society organised as study groups to write a new programme.

Lacking a shared programme yet requiring a minimum

of common activity, the RCG was easy prey for a trio of supporters of the American SWP who elaborated a regimen of single-issue campaigns on women, on Ireland, solidarity work with Chile and subsequently South Africa. In reaction against this reformist single-issuism and attracted by Thornett's credentials as a workers' leader, roughly a third of the RCG left to join the WSL in 1975.

Even Alan Thornett, whose political horizons do not generally extend far beyond the shop floor at Cowley, recognised the importance of the recruitment of this layer of cadres, which enabled the WSL to establish branches in Birmingham and Coventry in the West Midlands and in Liverpool. Speaking at a WSL Midlands Aggregate meeting in 1976 Thornett accurately termed this recruitment 'the biggest gain the WSL has ever made'. This would seem to fly in the face of Thornett's denigration of any orientation toward other left groups, except that the WSL leadership did almost nothing to achieve this regroupment.

...the London Spartacist Group

In late 1975 the iSt established in London a small group of experienced cadres, thus fulfilling a long-held aspiration to begin systematic work in Britain. In addition to its intrinsic strategic importance, the presence of Healy's SLL/WRP makes Britain one of the centres of ostensibly orthodox Trotskyist groupings. In the late 1950's and early 1960's the SLL's theoretical journal, *Labour Review*, had begun to elaborate the struggle against Pabloist liquidationism which the American SWP had grievously neglected after the 1953 split in the Fourth International, and which it was abandoning altogether by capitulating to the popularity of Castroism.

The SLL's 1961 document, 'The World Prospect for Socialism', moreover, was seen by the Revolutionary Tendency (RT—forerunner of the SL/U.S.) of the SWP as an articulation of its own anti-Pabloist views. The RT and later the Spartacist group sought to make common cause with Healy, but were blocked by the little despot's insistence on squelching the slightest dissent (as Thornett was to discover years later). Following our bureaucratic expulsion at the 1966 London conference of the IC, Britain remained sealed off to the Spartacist tendency for some time.

Beginning in 1975 the London Spartacist Group set out to systematically probe and polemicise with the myriad of groups and grouplets which populate the asteroid belt to the left of the centrist Pabloist IMG and the left-reformist 'state capitalist' I.S./SWP. The LSG's fight for political clarity and authentic Leninism frequently upset the cosy chumminess of the British Trotskyist left. Many were shocked to hear a group which refused to succumb to the charms of the left Labourite 'club', to embrace the green nationalism of the IRA or to go along with the charade of phony 'mass work' which are common denominators in the intensely parochial and workerist 'far left'.

There were plenty of evidences of crisis in the left-of-the-Communist Party 'family'. The I.S. was declining visibly from the time of the general election in February 1974 and suffered a hemorrhaging of cadre in 1975. The WRP had gone off the rails altogether, spending most of its efforts in slandering Joe Hansen (of the American SWP) and more recently in praising Libya's fanatical Muslim dictator Qaddafi. The IMG could never decide how many factions it had, oscillating up towards five, nor whether it would be super-Mandelite or a bridge to the Hansenites.

Among the smaller groups the RCG was on the road to becoming a cult, which is currently tailing after the geriatric Moscow-loyal Stalinists. Sean Matgamna's Workers Fight (ejected from the Cliffites in 1971) had just joined with the Workers Power group (a 1975 vintage I.S. expulsion) to form the International-Communist League (I-CL), while covering up differences on the Russian question (Workers Power is state capitalist), the Labour Party and Ireland. The Workers Fight/Workers Power marriage of convenience came apart shortly before its first anniversary, having discovered unbridgeable disagreements over... Ireland and the Labour Party.

The WSL was in many respects the most serious of the split-offs from the 'far-left' Big Three (SWP, IMG and WRP). The harsh contradiction between its claims to Trotskyist orthodoxy and its economist practice clearly labelled the WSL as a group heading for an explosion. And it was initially open to political discussion with other avowed anti-Pabloists. Its October 1975 document, 'Fourth International—Problems and Tasks', sought to re-evaluate the history of the post-war Trotskyist movement and to serve as a basis for discussions with other tendencies, 'especially those expelled from the IC' (published in the 'Trotskyism Today' supplements to *Socialist Press* Nos. 21-23).

The iSt responded to this invitation with a letter (dated 17 June 1976) pointing to the WSL's softness toward social democracy and focusing on our analysis of the formation of the deformed workers states (particularly the methodologically key case of Cuba), as well as reviewing our relations with Healy's IC. The letter also attacked the workerist view that the degeneration of the

IC or any tendency could simply be ascribed to its petty-bourgeois composition. Although this was the only reply to the WSL's offer of discussions, the iSt letter was not circulated even to the NC for over a year.

However, the aggressive propaganda work of the LSG made it impossible to simply seal off the WSL against Spartacism. The first fruit of these efforts was an amendment from the Liverpool branch to the international resolution at the WSL's first annual conference in December 1976. Although flawed by its attachment to WSL workerism, and hence hostile to the iSt's regroupment perspective, it nonetheless demanded recognition of the principled approach to the Cuban Revolution taken by the Revolutionary Tendency in the American SWP. This was clearly counterposed to the Thornett leadership's position that there had existed only two views on Cuba: the Pabloists' enthusing for Castro and Healy's myopic denial that a revolution had taken place at all.

The leadership urged the conference delegates to reject the amendment, not because it was wrong (in fact they claimed to agree with it) but to prevent the resolution from turning into a book. But when the membership voted to include this amendment, the only successful motion against the platform during the proceedings, Thornett and his lieutenants simply buried it, so that the resolution as amended never saw the light of day. Although this issue had no immediate consequence, it was indicative of the WSL leaders' frenzied reaction to anything smacking of Spartacism.

The CDLM and the Lib-Lab Coalition

However, the real catalyst for the amorphous left-wing opposition which was to result in the Trotskyist Faction was the WSL's intervention in the British class struggle. A challenge to the Thornett leadership took shape around objections to the WSL-created Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement (CDLM) and to its failure to place the government question at the centre of WSL trade-union work. This failure was particularly glaring after the formation of the Labour Party's parliamentary coalition with the Liberals in March 1977.

In response to the reappearance of this British version of the popular front for the first time since World War II, the international Spartacist tendency called for 'a policy of conditional non-support to Labour in upcoming elections unless and until they repudiate coalitionism' ('Break the Liberal/Labour Coalition in Britain', *WV* No. 152, 8 April 1977). But even though Callaghan & Co. had suppressed even the organisational independence of the Labour Party by openly tying it to the bourgeois Liberals—with, moreover, the acquiescence of every single 'left' MP, from Tony Benn and Michael Foot on down—the Workers Socialist League simply concluded that the 'lefts' should have demanded and themselves set up a new leadership based on socialist policies' (*Socialist Press*, 25 March 1977).

Within the Workers Socialist League there was dissatisfaction with the persistently apolitical character of the WSL's trade-union work. A first document, 'The WSL and the Governmental Crisis' ([WSL] *Internal Bulletin* No. 19, 25 May 1977), submitted by Green, Kellett and Piercey, attempted to programmatically generalise the objections:

'Although the toolroom strike objectively challenged the Social Contract and posed the removal of the anti-working class Labour Government, the consciousness of the leadership thrown up in the struggle, the subjective factor, did not correspond to those objective tasks.... Although the WSL alone recognised that the toolroom strike precipitated a major governmental crisis, Socialist Press failed to make the question of government a central programmatic issue during the strike.'

At this time Green-Kellett-Piercey had not decisively broken from the WSL's accommodation to Labourism, and were searching to render the perennial Thornett slogan, 'Make the Lefts Fight', revolutionary. They called on the WSL to 'place demands on the lefts to support the [toolroom] strike against the Social Contract and remove the right wing [of the parliamentary Labour Party]'.

The Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, founded in 1976, was an uninspired imitation of the WRP/SLL's All Trades Union Alliance. In practice it turned out to be nothing but a forum for tedious recounting of shop-floor struggles. As it became clear that the rank and file would not flock to the CDLM simply because it put 'democracy' in its name, it soon turned into an arena for mutual accommodation between the WSL and other left groups (specifically the IMG and I-CL). Most importantly, the platform of this pan-union propaganda bloc—like Alan Thornett's campaign for president of the Transport and General Workers Union—did not seek to break the mass of British workers from their Labourite traditions and consciousness.

The CDLM programme comes down to opposition to wage controls and spending cuts, and calls for more democracy in the unions. It even limits the call for nationalisation to those firms threatened with bankruptcy or large-scale redundancies. It does not contain any demand for the expropriation of all capitalist industry, thus placing the CDLM to the right

of the maximum programme of the Labour Party on this question. There is no mention of opposition to the presence of the British imperialist army in Northern Ireland or to the Labour 'lefts' chauvinist call for import controls, much less of the need for a revolutionary workers government.

Writing of the reformist CDLM, an LSG leaflet noted that it embodied the central weakness of the British left: '...glorification of spontaneous "rank and file" trade union militancy and...political capitulation to British social democracy' ('CDLM: WSL's "Short Cut" to Nowhere', 27 March 1977). A parallel criticism was raised in the Green-Kellett-Piercey document:

'Our failure to make the question of programme and government central was not confined to the pages of Socialist Press. It was evident at the CDLM recall conference....

'Although a special resolution was passed by the conference on the Lib-Lab coalition, the vital political question facing the conference on government was relegated almost to a side issue, discussed separately from the wages struggle and the fight for leadership in the trade unions....'

The LSG leaflet also attacked the WSL's justification for its adaptation to shop-floor militancy: 'For a small grouping, like the WSL, to decide to "shake off propagandism" in order to proceed directly to "conquering the masses" is profoundly anti-Leninist. A revolutionary organisation only acquires the ability to lead whole sections of the proletariat as it assembles a cadre trained through hard principled struggle for communist politics' ('CDLM: WSL's "Short Cut" to Nowhere').

The Green-Kellett-Piercey document touched on the WSL's policy of shunning polemical combat with centrist groups, although the criticism was largely empirical and put in the mildest terms: 'We also showed political weakness in not taking up the IMG adequately at the conference.... their argument that the CDLM shouldn't (politically) counterpose itself to the Stalinists' "diversionary" initiatives was part of their left cover for Stalinism. The difference between us and the Pabloites was not that they had differences of where and how to fight for programme...; but they are not prepared to fight at all for programme.' Neither, it turned out, was the Thornett leadership, which responded:

'We are told by the comrades that we did not take up the IMG adequately at the conference. That we should have made a clear statement on their role as a left cover for the Stalinists. Such a course of action would have been a disaster. It would have been certain to drive the IMG out of the CDLM.' (Reply to "The WSL and the Governmental Crisis", by Alan Thornett, [WSL] *Internal Bulletin* No. 21)

Workers Government and 'Make the Lefts Fight'

The French municipal elections and Irish general elections, which both took place in the spring of 1977, renewed the debate inside the WSL on the question of popular frontism, in particular on the question of votes to the workers parties of a popular front. At the WSL's summer school in July this issue was debated both at the session on Ireland and at the National Committee meeting. It was indicative of the scant importance given to such 'abstract' subjects prior to this time that even *Socialist Press* editor John Lister, backed by Alan Thornett, could consider it a rightist notion that any self-proclaimed revolutionary would even consider voting for the workers parties of a popular front.

At the NC meeting spokesmen for the opposing positions—Steve Murray for voting for workers parties in a popular front and Mark Hyde and Jim Short against—were directed to submit documents defending their respective positions. Without waiting for the resolution of the debate, however, *Socialist Press* went into print on 17 August declaring that it would continue to call for votes to Labour until such time as there were actually joint Lib-Lab slates. And as the faction fight developed, for the first time drawing hard lines on programmatic questions in the WSL, Thornett, Lister & Co. became far more cautious in toying around with positions which had been branded 'Spartacist'.

In the course of the discussions over the question of voting for candidates of a popular front, some individuals switched positions and the battle lines began to be drawn. A document, 'The Coalition, "Make the Lefts Fight" and the Workers' Government Slogan' ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 2, January 1978), was written during late autumn by Green, Holford, Kellett, Murray, Quigley and Short which called for a position of 'no vote for the candidates of workers' parties (like the Labour Party) which are in a Popular Front combination' (Thesis 2 of the conclusion). On the question of the slogan of a workers government the document took the position of Trotsky, who spelled this out in discussions with leaders of the then-revolutionary American SWP: '...the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is the only possible form of a workers' and farmers' government.' Thus point 7 of the conclusions states:

'The WSL advances the slogan of "a workers' government" as a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its essential content—a government that rules in the interests of the working class and bases itself, not on the bourgeois state, but on the independent organisations of the working

class—remains, whether or not it is advocated as a propaganda or an agitational slogan.'

Concerning the question of voting for popular front candidates the document states forcefully that this is no tactical or technical matter. This question is today the dividing line between those who give 'critical' support to the popular front, seeking to place it in power, and the Bolshevik policy of proletarian opposition to coalitionism. But this is far from a passive or abstentionist position. The authors of the document wrote:

'... We call for the unions nationally to withdraw union sponsorship from all MPs who support the coalition.... We must develop a fight in local Labour Party constituencies for the removal of sitting MPs and the selection of candidates who stand on a revolutionary programme opposed to the coalition.... In bye-elections at present we can give no support to LP candidates who defend the coalition and will have to consider critically supporting in some cases centrist or revisionist candidates if they make opposition to the coalition and wage control central to their platform.' ('The Coalition, "Make the Lefts Fight" and the Workers' Government Slogan')

Whereas in the past the WSL had not taken a clear position on the question of voting for popular front candidates, its capitulation to social democracy was clearly expressed in the standing demand to 'make the lefts fight', the alpha and omega of Thornett's policy toward the Labour Party. This policy came under sharp attack in the oppositionists' document:

'The present unity of Heffer, Benn, Foot, Healey, and Callaghan in jointly defending the coalition reveals the essential programmatic agreement between the "left" and right....
... we should in no way create a false distinction between them and their right-wing bed fellows when the "lefts" are in no way distinguishing themselves from the right wing by their actions.... To place demands exclusively on the "lefts" when they are unified with the right wing in opposing the struggles in the working class developing on the two decisive issues of wage control and the coalition, means that the WSL argues that the "lefts" do fundamentally differ from the right-wing. When the "lefts" have made no break from the right, not even verbally allied themselves with the wages struggles, the demand that they "kick out" Healey, Callaghan et al acts in practice to strengthen illusions both in the "lefts" as an alternative leadership and in reformism.
'This present orientation of the movement, summed up in

the slogan "Make the Lefts Fight", elevates the *tactic* of the united front and critical support into a strategic orientation.

'The League places these demands on the lefts because it makes its starting point a preconceived desire to secure unity with the left against the right, and from an ahistorical perspective that the task is to take the working class through a fresh stage of reformist betrayal.' [emphasis in original] (*Ibid.*)

The Formation of the Trotskyist Faction

Around the time of the WSL 1977 summer school, some of the emerging oppositionists began to realise that fidelity to Trotskyism required a full-scale programmatic combat against Thornett's workerism. In a letter dated 13 July 1977, Green wrote to Holford:

'I have been re-reading some of the Spartacist's material over the last couple of days, including some of their basic documents (declaration of principles, intervention at the 66 IC conference), their letter to the OCI and their letter to the [Spanish] LCE, and the founding document of their French section, the Ligue Trotskyiste de France. What has struck me is the absolute consistency with which they have fought for their positions since the early 1960's, and through the period subsequent to their foundation they have been able to build in a real way both in America and internationally on the basis of democratic centralism. Politically they seem to me to represent the only revolutionary current in existence. They have understood the revisions of Pabloism and the complementary errors of the IC in a very complete way, have analysed and fought all the petty bourgeois radicalism that has been prevalent since the late 60's (feminism, New Leftism, guerrillaism) and in a complementary fashion have stood out against the capitulation of the so-called Trotskyists of the USFI (both wings) to Popular Frontism and to the widespread economism that has afflicted the left since the working class began to break out into struggle in a big way over the last decade. This political independence and consistency has been reflected in a very precise and conscious understanding of the tasks that face small groups of revolutionaries in the present conditions, summed up in their formulation of the fighting propaganda group. The value of their positions has been apparent again and again in facing the problems that actually confront the WSL (syndicalist approach, obscuring of the need for a new revolutionary party opposed to the Labour Party, misuse of resources, neglect of the left groups and the lack of a consistent political line

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Trotskyist Faction resignation statement

The debate at this conference has exposed in the clearest light the majority's hostility to the highest task of Marxists today: the construction of an international cadre hardened in the fight for a communist programme.

The counterposition of the Bolshevik positions of the Trotskyist Faction to the hardened right-centrism of the central leadership has brought forth another shameless defence of the majority's Pabloite attachment to the Labour Party, their capitulationist attitude to nationalism, and in particular Irish nationalism, their all pervading economism and minimalism, and their parochialism.

It is apparent that the fight for the re-creation of the Fourth International can only take place in implacable opposition to this parody of Trotskyism. Recognising the fundamental divergence between our faction and all other tendencies within the Workers' Socialist League that has been confirmed this weekend, we resign from the WSL.

We intend to immediately open discussions with the international Spartacist tendency, with the aim of moving towards a fused organisation.

Forward to the British Section of the Reforged Fourth International!

19 February 1978

Eunice Aktar—WSL 1978, Liverpool branch
Richard Brookes—IS 1973-75; WSL 1975-78, Oxford General branch
Carolyn Dixon—WSL 1977-78, Birmingham branch
E—WSL 1976-78, Hackney branch, WSL Turkish Group, London Area Committee
F—WSL 1976-78, Hackney branch, WSL Turkish Group
Alastair Green—IS 1973-74; Left Opposition (ex-IS) 1974; RCG 1975; founder member WSL, 1975-78, Birmingham branch chairman, West Midlands Area Committee, convenor of WSL National Student Fraction; *Socialist Press* Editorial Board
Clive Hills—SLL/WRP 1973-76, Editorial Board of *Keep Left* (paper of the Young Socialists, youth group of the WRP); WSL 1976-78, Oxford Student/Print branch
Alan Holford—IS 1971-73 (expelled); Revolutionary Opposition (ex-IS) 1973-74; founder member RCG, Political Committee RCG, 1974-75; founder member WSL 1975-78, WSL National Committee, Birmingham

branch secretary, West Midlands Area chairman, convenor of WSL Women's Commission
Dewi Jones—WSL 1976-78, Liverpool branch
Mark Kinker—WSL 1977-78 (Bath)
Leena—Maoist organisations (Asia) 1972-74; WSL 1977-78, Central London branch
Paul Lannigan—SLL 1968-72, Derry branch, Northern Ireland, Irish National Committee (1968-1970), full-time organiser Liverpool SLL/YS 1970-72; WSL 1977-78, West London branch, WSL Irish Commission
Cath McMillan—WSL 1977-78, Coventry branch
Joe Quigley—Communist Party of Great Britain 1969-70; IS 1970-74 (expelled); Left Faction (IS), Left Opposition (ex-IS) 1974; RCG 1975; founder member WSL 1975-78, North West area secretary, Manchester branch secretary, WSL National Committee, WSL Irish Commission
Jim Saunders—IS 1974-76; WSL 1976-78, West London branch secretary, London Area Committee, WSL Irish Commission, *Socialist Press* Editorial Board; Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement Organising Committee
Mike Shortland—Young Communist League 1970-73; IMG 1975-76; WSL 1977-78, West London branch, London Area Committee
Robert Styles—WSL 1976-78 (Bath)
Caroline Walton—WSL 1977-78, Central London branch
Jo Woodward—IS 1972-74 (expelled); Left Opposition (ex-IS) 1974; WSL 1976-78, Coventry branch
Tim Woodward—IS 1972-74 (expelled); Left Opposition (ex-IS) 1974; WSL 1976-78, Coventry branch chairman, West Midlands Area Committee, convenor WSL national NALGO Fraction
John Zucker—WSL 1976-78, Birmingham branch

Although not a member of the Trotskyist Faction, and with some reservations, I supported their main perspectives document, and I stand by that. The discussion and voting at this conference have confirmed for me that the WSL is not to be budged from what I regard as its fundamentally wrong positions, and I therefore also resign.

T—WRP 1974-75, expelled as part of the Thornett opposition; WSL 1975-78, Editorial Board, *Socialist Press*, London Area Committee

In defence of the revo

'On the most general level the Belgian events teach that the prime necessity is to build a revolutionary cadre. This task cannot be evaded by any consideration of immediate tactical success or to win approval from centrists of other tendencies. It cannot begin if major theoretical questions are not brought forward for discussion or if efforts are made to form combinations in which principled questions are put to one side. It cannot begin by support for centrist "personalities" or the establishment of relationships which involve concessions on principle.' (*The World Prospect for Socialism*, resolution of Socialist Labour League, 1961)

'We are told by the comrades that we did not take up the IMG adequately at the [second CDLM] conference. That we should have made a clear statement on their role as a left cover for the Stalinists. Such a course of action would have been a disaster. It would have been certain to drive the IMG out of the CDLM.... Had we done that [driven the IMG out of the CDLM] the possibilities we have now in Scotland would have been out of the question. Had the platform or the organising committee made such a statement the Scottish people would have walked out with Grogan and Pennington convinced that we were sectarians.' (Comrade Thornett's reply to 'The WSL and the Governmental Crisis', *Internal Bulletin* 21, p. 7)

For the International Committee's Struggle Against Pabloism

(1) *The International Committee*—In this epoch of capitalist decay the only hope for humanity is the ability of the international working class led by a Leninist party to make a socialist revolution. This was the political basis of the International Committee's fight against the liquidationist Pabloist tendency, both in 1951-53 and at the time of 'reunification' in 1963. Any revolutionary organisation today must base itself upon this initial fight, despite that fight's flaws and shortcomings. Arguing against the idea that Stalinist parties or petit-bourgeois nationalists could make the socialist revolution, the IC clearly stood for the building of Trotskyist parties in every country, for the central role of the working class in the colonial revolution and for the programme of political revolution in the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states.

The IC was flawed by the delayed and incomplete nature of the fight against Pablo and by its failure to establish an international democratic-centralist structure. These inadequacies, coupled with isolation in imperialist America during the Cold War period, prepared the way for the defection of the initially dominant section, the Socialist Workers Party, in 1963. Nevertheless the IC maintained an essentially correct stand against Pabloism during the fifties and early sixties, exemplified by the SLL's international resolution of 1961, *The World Prospect for Socialism*, which reaffirmed that:

'... Any retreat from the strategy of political independence of the working class and the construction of revolutionary parties will take on the significance of a world-historical blunder on the part of the Trotskyist movement.'

(2) *Cuba*—The correct programmatic stance of the IC lacked a firm theoretical underpinning—a consequence of the hasty and in some respects superficial fight carried out against Pablo in 1953. This weakness was graphically revealed in the IC's inability to assess correctly the Cuban revolution.

The Pabloites, joined by the American SWP, prostrated themselves before Castro and described the Cuban regime as a healthy workers' state. By maintaining that Cuba remained capitalist after the expropriations of 1961, the SLL avoided capitulation to the Cuban leadership's immense popularity among petit-bourgeois radicals but only at the expense of denying reality—i.e., denying that a deformed workers' state had been established in Cuba. The SLL's refusal to make a correct characterisation was at bottom Pabloism afraid of itself. The SLL accepted the Pabloites' false premise that to say Cuba was a workers' state (even if deformed) was necessarily to say that Castro was indeed a genuine, if only 'instinctive', Marxist. This laid the basis for the Healy leadership's subsequent Pabloite capitulation to the Stalinist bureaucracies of China and Vietnam—undeniably (deformed) workers' states.

At this time only the Revolutionary Tendency in the American SWP had the correct position on the Cuban question: that the class character of the regime established by the petit-bourgeois guerrillaists was, from the time of its consolidation in mid-1961, that of a deformed workers' state. As they pointed out at the time, the destruction of the Batista state apparatus by Castro's

petit-bourgeois guerrilla forces, the feebleness of the domestic bourgeoisie and the weakness of the organised proletariat as a contender for power in its own right together produced a situation where, when U.S. imperialist hostility forced the Castro regime to look to the Soviet Union for material assistance, the guerrillaists were able to establish a deformed workers' state. Essentially similar conditions had produced the Chinese and Yugoslav deformed workers' states after the Second World War and were subsequently to result in the Indo-Chinese deformed workers' states. While insurgent petit-bourgeois guerrilla forces can in certain situations successfully overturn capitalist property relations they are inherently incapable of establishing a revolutionary workers' state—that is a workers' state in which the class-conscious proletariat holds political power—precisely because the guerrilla strategy relegates the proletariat to an essentially passive role. The workers' states which come into being in these circumstances are necessarily deformed from their inception by the rule of a bureaucratic caste, originally centering on the guerrilla leaders. The active intervention of the working class, led by a Trotskyist party, is required to overthrow the bureaucracy and establish workers' democracy through political revolution, allowing the fight for socialism to be carried forward.

(Some members of the WSL look to some revised variant of Mandel/Wohlforth's theory of 'structural assimilation' as an alternative explanation of the guerrilla-derived workers' states, including Cuba. This pretentious 'theory' has not only the disadvantage of falsely posing the whole question solely in terms of the military might of the Soviet Union, but it is also profoundly reformist in methodology: the new guerrilla-initiated states are held to be originally bourgeois, and to be transformed into deformed workers' states through a peaceful process of reforms.)

(3) *Pabloism undefeated*—The incomplete character and ultimate failure of the IC's opposition to Pablo and his followers is testified to by the subsequent convergence of the SWP with the International Secretariat forces, the continued existence and growth of the 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International' and the rapprochement between the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste of France and the United Secretariat. Only by deepening and making consistent the IC's assault on Pabloism will it be possible to destroy politically the United Secretariat and thus lay the basis for the re-creation of the Fourth International.

The Degeneration of the IC and the Development of the WSL

(4) *Programmatic degeneration*—Marxists must take the history of their own movement seriously. In the case

of the WSL this means above all a critical assessment of the history of the IC, and particularly of the SLL/WRP. However, thus far the WSL leadership has dealt with the question of the date and character of the SLL/WRP's qualitative degeneration in the most haphazard and confused fashion. In the proposed submission to the XIth World Congress of the United Secretariat, 'The Poisoned Well', the leadership suggests that the SLL abandoned the Transitional Programme in 1971, but that in any case this programmatic question is subordinate to the question of the later loss of 'precious worker cadres'. Similarly *The Battle for Trotskyism* suggests that the expulsion of the WSL comrades at the end of 1974 marked the point of qualitative degeneration in the SLL/WRP. Yet when the WRP's *Workers Press* collapsed in early 1976 it was called a 'savage' 'blow to Trotskyism' (*Socialist Press* 28) so perhaps there was no qualitative degeneration at all! To straighten out this mish-mash we must recognise that the question of programme is central to our characterisation of a political tendency.

The flaws in the IC's formal defence of Trotskyism crystallised into a qualitative revision of programme in 1966-67. During this period the SLL, the dominant section of the IC, adopted an approach which was indistinguishable from the Pabloite revisionism that the IC had originally been formed to fight. On a number of decisive questions *the SLL began to look to forces other than the proletariat under Trotskyist leadership as the revolutionary 'vanguard'*.

(a) *Stalinism*—The SLL's growing softness on Stalinism was consolidated into blatant tail-ending of the Vietnamese NLF leadership and the Chinese Red Guards. The apotheosis for Vietnamese Stalinism seen in the WRP's press in 1975 were presaged almost a decade earlier by a posture of first silence on, and later uncritical support for, the NLF. According to M. Banda, writing in the *Fourth International* of February 1968:

'[Vietnam] demonstrates the transcendental power and resilience of a protracted people's war led and organised by a party based on the working class and the poor peasantry and inspired by the example of the October revolution.... It is indisputably true to say that, on the basis of the Vietnam experience, guns combined with the courage and endurance of individual guerrillas would have meant little or nothing if Ho Chi Minh and the other leaders were unable to analyse the principal and secondary contradictions within Vietnam as well as between Vietnam and imperialism and on that basis outline a strategy for the conquest of power.' (emphasis in original)

Similarly, the SLL enthusiastically took sides in the bureaucratic infighting of the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution', praising the Red Guards as 'those who are fighting to defend the conquests of the Chinese revolution and to extend those conquests' (*Newsletter*, 14 January 1967), and even equating the Maoist youths with the SLL's own Young Socialists in Britain.

Public Meetings

The rebirth of Trotskyism
in Britain —

WSL split—
Spartacist League founded

Speakers: JOE QUIGLEY (Central Committee Spartacist League)
ALASTAIR GREEN (Central Committee Spartacist League)

London

Caxton Settlement House
129 St John's Way, N19
(Archway tube)

April 21 7:30 pm

Birmingham

Conference Room
Labour Social Club
Bristol Street

May 12 7:45 pm

Oxford

East Oxford Community Centre
Princes Road (Corner Princes
Road and Cowley Road)

May 19 7:30 pm

For further details: Spartacist League, PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE (01) 278 2232

Trotskyist Faction:

Revolutionary programme

(b) *Arab nationalism*—The SLL's support for Arab nationalism (dressed up as support for something called the 'Arab Revolution') betrayed the same approach. The political independence of the working class, and the consequent necessity for the Trotskyist vanguard, was abandoned in favour of the 'national revolution' and Nasserism:

'Nasserism is progressive insofar as it represents the hopes of millions of downtrodden fellaheen and workers, artisans and professional workers for a better future and a happier one in a united Arab world.' (*Newsletter*, 24 June 1967)

This capitulatory policy, which amounted to nothing less than a complete denial of the validity of the strategy of Permanent Revolution for the Arab East, was adopted by the SLL to justify support for the 'progressive' Arab bourgeoisies in their 1967 war with Israel—a predatory, inter-capitalist war which resulted from the conflicting territorial ambitions of the Israeli and Arab ruling classes.

(c) *'Make the Lefts Fight'*—This slogan was first advanced by the *Newsletter* on 3 December 1966. The demand was aimed at the left social-democrats, who were called upon to adopt a programme of 'socialist policies' (a phrase which could easily be seen to encompass the existing policies of the reformists), and who were put forward as an alternative leadership against the top rightwingers of the Labour Party.

The OCI did not share the SLL's grosser programmatic revisions, but as the passive and subordinate partner of the IC's federated bloc it made no public critique of the SLL's revisions. Since then the OCI has moved markedly to the right, particularly in its capitulation to the 'Union of the Left' and its wholesale adaptation to social democracy.

It is clear that the degeneration of the IC predated the factional struggle in the WRP by seven years. What then did the development of the WSL represent?

(5) *Development of the WSL*—In the fight against Healy the group that went on to form the WSL broke partially from the WRP's conception of party-building as simply a matter of meeting recruitment targets and sought to develop policies which could mobilise the working class over basic attacks on living standards and jobs. The mystifications of Healy's 'philosophy' were pragmatically abandoned and a stance of openness to questions which the Healyites addressed inadequately, if at all—such as the history of the Fourth International, the development of consistent trade-union work, Ireland, or the oppression of women—was adopted. But without a serious investigation of the origins of the SLL/WRP's degeneration, with nothing approaching a consistent revolutionary programme, nor even any real will on the part of the leadership of the WSL to develop such a programme, this initial apparent openness was to have little effect on the organisation's subsequent development.

What has been central to the WSL's development though is the trade-union work at Cowley. The rejection of Healy's sectarian ultimatum, which first produced the fight within the WRP, represented a positive response to the WRP's crisis-mongering and maximalism. More importantly, however, this rejection did not signify a willingness to take up a fight for the full Transitional Programme in the unions but in fact signalled a retreat from political confrontation with the existing consciousness of the working class in favour of radical trade unionism. The WSL's break from Healyite maximalism was, in the final analysis, a break towards economism and minimalism.

It is from the worst period of the SLL/WRP, the period following its qualitative degeneration in 1966-67, that the WSL has inherited and developed its central orientation—its programmatic adaptation to the existing consciousness of the masses, and the fraudulent mass work justified by that adaptation. Likewise, the WSL's accommodation to social democracy comes from this period, and even the slogan which most aptly expresses that accommodation, 'Make the Lefts Fight'!

The WSL's opportunist, step-at-a-time interpretation of the Transitional Programme, was developed in part in opposition to the WRP's inconsistent and unserious attitude to trade-union work. But the claim that 'programme... begins from the existing state of consciousness... and directs towards the necessary

policies' (*Socialist Press* 72) directly contradicts Trotsky's understanding of the nature and role of our programme:

'The program must express the objective tasks of the working class rather than the backwardness of the workers. It must reflect society as it is and not the backwardness of the working class. It is an instrument to overcome and vanquish the backwardness.... We cannot guarantee that the masses will solve the crisis, but we must express the situation as it is, and that is the task of the program.' (Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, 1st edition, p. 125, 'The Political Backwardness of the American Workers', discussion of 19 May 1938)

The leadership's desire to opportunistically short-cut the fight for revolutionary leadership in the working class is demonstrated by the chronic unwillingness to advance in full the basic principles of the Transitional Programme. Two recent examples of the use of such a partial (i.e., minimal) programme are in the recent Cowley election campaign and in the CDLM—neither of which could be characterised as anything other than left-reformism.

The Programme and Practice of the WSL

(6) *The Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement*—The CDLM encapsulates the WSL's parochial and opportunist practice. Although it has turned out to be a miserable failure, it was first founded as an ambitious organisational expression of the WSL's aim to get closer to the working class and carry its politics into the trade unions. It therefore deserves the closest scrutiny.

(a) *Programme*—The programme of the CDLM is a programme of minimal trade-union reformism which omits many points that the WSL leadership agrees with formally. The only two clauses which address questions outside of the trade-union area: 'For Women's Rights!' and 'Stop Racism!'—were introduced only as a result of pressure from the Pabloites of the IMG and the ICL.

The CDLM programme ignores the vital internationalist obligations of the working class in Britain: there is no reference to Ireland, to South Africa, or to NATO and the EEC (both of which are anti-Soviet, imperialist alliances which we have a duty to fight and expose, a task which is particularly important at this time because of the Carter administration's current 'Human Rights' campaign which is designed to garner popular support for the military mobilisation continually underway against the Soviet Union).

The reformism of the CDLM programme lies in its failure to even attempt to connect the daily struggles of workers with the struggle for state power. Thus while the CDLM is for the nationalisation of 'genuinely bankrupt' companies, it has nothing to say about the necessity for the working class to expropriate the capitalist class as a whole, in order to lay the basis for a planned economy. There is no call for a workers' government (which for revolutionaries is a call for the dictatorship of the proletariat), nor is there any statement on the need to oust the bureaucracy in the trade unions and replace it with a revolutionary leadership.

The CDLM programme ensures that the political struggle between the revolutionary party and the present inchoate and reformist consciousness of the masses of workers will never occur. This conflict is vitally necessary for the training of a Trotskyist cadre in the trade unions.

(b) *The CDLM Mark II*—The warmed-over version of the CDLM presented in the NC majority's British Perspectives document is designed by the leadership to forestall criticisms of the disastrous organisation it has created by adding a hard, organised *image* to the unprincipled programme and practice of the existing CDLM. Although there is a gesture to the left—mention of international questions that must be taken up by workers in this country—it is clear that in all its essential features the 'new' CDLM will closely resemble its discredited reformist predecessor. Already we are told that the new organisation will have 'a programmatic answer to the immediate burning questions facing trade unionists and industrial workers'—which for the leadership means another minimum programme.

(c) *Propaganda bloc*—The tactic of the united front has a dual aim: to advance the struggle of the proletariat around elements of our programme, while simultaneously providing an opportunity for the

revolutionary vanguard to destroy political formations that are hostile to it. This is achieved through the conclusion of limited agreements with other political tendencies to undertake joint *action* around a particular question while retaining full freedom of criticism. If the reformists and centrists refuse to cooperate with us, this provides an opportunity to expose their unwillingness to fight for the interests of the working class.

It is, however, impermissible for revolutionaries to bloc with centrists or reformists to produce common propaganda purporting to offer a general political perspective to the working class or a section of workers. The CDLM is such a rotten propaganda bloc, in which the WSL shows no qualms about liquidating itself into a partnership with the IMG and, to a lesser extent, the ICL. This is not surprising: since the programme of the CDLM is not revolutionary, non-revolutionaries like the IMG and ICL have no trouble agreeing with it. The joint intervention at the SWP Rank and File conference, the jointly produced car bulletin and the Scottish CDLM conference have one common implication: that the Pabloites and ourselves do not essentially differ when it comes to the 'real' struggle. The opportunist logic of this bloc is produced in Cde. Thornett's reply to the document 'The WSL and the Governmental Crisis' quoted at the beginning of this document, where he clearly states that he is more concerned about jeopardising the WSL's friendly relations with the Pabloites by appearing 'sectarian' than about exposing their revisionist politics. In typical opportunist fashion this smuggling up to the Pabloites was excused by reference to 'the possibilities we have now in Scotland', and the argument that *accommodation* to the politics of the IMG would help win over a section of the Scottish Socialist League. But softness towards revisionism never won anyone to revolutionary politics, and sure enough, it did not win the SSL—which is now ensconced within the IMG. Left elements can be broken from the IMG only if we ruthlessly criticise the revisionism of their leadership.

(7) *Trade-union work*—The WSL's trade-union work has no overall national plan and is without clear perspectives. No attempt has been made to concentrate forces in particular factories or unions of importance. In an unconscious way the WSL has turned to work in support of particular strikes as a primary field of activity, without any consideration of what political lessons can be drawn from them, and with no consideration of whether we have the resources to do this work without damaging other fields of work or the training of cadres.

(a) *Trade-union groups on the full Transitional Programme*—We counterpose to the liquidationist perspective of haphazard 'mass work', exemplified by the CDLM, the organising of trade-union groups which include members and sympathisers of the WSL, to be built in *selected* factories and trade unions where our work will have the maximum political impact and which can serve as an *example* of how communists do trade-union work. Such groups should be based on the fundamental demands of the Transitional Programme, culminating in the slogan of a workers' government. Membership in them should be conditional on agreement with this programme and willingness to fight for it under the discipline of the group. Naturally the programme of such groups must be amplified in accordance with the specific conditions in the unions concerned as well as the political issues of current importance to the working class both nationally and internationally.

(b) *Trade-union election policy*—Despite its ritual obeisance to the Transitional Programme as the programme on which it supposedly bases its trade-union work, the recent election campaign at Cowley was waged around the *real* trade-union programme of the WSL: opposition to corporate bargaining, opposition to participation, advocacy of a sliding scale of wages combined with a call to 'kick out the Right Wing'. We call for a break from this opportunist practice. Where we stand candidates for election they must present a revolutionary political alternative to the reformists and centrists—they must stand on our full trade-union programme, the Transitional Programme, otherwise we are only campaigning for reformism within the unions. Where we are not able to stand our own candidates for election, we may use the tactic of critical support to vote

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for a candidate of another political tendency but only if he or she is committed to fighting for something which in a crucial way would represent a gain for the working class. The record of the League to date has been to promiscuously extend its none-too-critical support to various reformist bureaucrats. One outstanding example of this is Bob Wright who campaigns on his record as a proven scab, a loyal enforcer of the Social Contract and an advocate of reactionary chauvinist import controls, but whom the leadership has decided to support in the second round of the forthcoming AUEW ballot just as they did the last time he stood.

(c) *Trade-union work at Cowley*—The WSL's roots in the working class are deepest at Cowley, and it is as a result of the work carried out there that the organisation is best known. Victories at Cowley can point the way forward for the class, while mistakes represent real setbacks for at least a section of it. Bearing in mind the pressures towards opportunism and economism which inevitably operate on cadres in the unions, the organisation must exert tightly centralised control over all trade-union work. In particular the work at Cowley must be closely supervised by the National Committee and the day-to-day lessons of our most important area of work must be made accessible to the whole membership.

(8) *The Labour Party*—The inability to see politics except through the grimy spectacles of the Labour Party is a chronic affliction on the British left. Two opposite but complementary deviations result from this. The economists of the SWP/IS exemplify one pole: the dismissal of parliamentary and governmental events as irrelevant to workers. By confining themselves to militant trade unionism and leaving the reformist leadership of the working class unchallenged, they in fact strengthen the Labour Party's hold on the working class. The *Militant* group represents the other extreme: the subordination of the proletariat's struggles to the pre-ordained necessity to elect a Labour Government (or to keep one in power) and the abandonment of any perspective of politically destroying the Labour Party or of attempting to build a revolutionary party. The strategy of the *Militant* amounts to pressuring the Labour bureaucracy towards 'socialism'. While it stands to the left of both organisations, the League veers between these twin courses of capitulation. The fundamental impulse is 'radical' trade unionism which divorces 'trade-union struggles' (for which the minimum programme of the CDLM is sufficient) from 'politics'—a sphere worthy of comment in internal discussion or in the pages of *Socialist Press*, but which the leadership really views as the preserve of the 'lefts' and members of the Labour Party. The central strategy of the leadership with relation to the existing leaders of the working class is summed up by the phrase 'Make the Lefts Fight'. The slogan derives from an ill-formed conception that the Labour Party falls into two quite distinct wings, left and right, seen by the leadership as in some way representing the proletariat and the bourgeoisie respectively. Hence the 'critical' support given to the 'Lefts'. Rather than offering an alternative to the betrayals of the right, the 'Make the Lefts Fight' slogan only serves to lend our authority to the 'left-wing' credentials of the thoroughly rotten counter-revolutionary parliamentary cretins in the Tribune group and thus serves to tie the political development of the working class to a wing of social democracy.

(9) *The Lib/Lab coalition*—The refusal to counterpose the programme of Marxism to the Labour Party and all currents at present in it (shown in the 'Make the Lefts Fight' policy and by the opposition to the WRP standing candidates against Labour in the 1974 General Election) is confirmed by the leadership's policy on the Lib/Lab coalition. The coalition with the Liberals is equivalent to a Popular Front. Labour Party candidates in this period stand as representatives of a *bourgeois* political formation, the coalition, and thus to extend even the most critical support to them is a breach of principle.

With some exceptions, the resurgence of bourgeois coalitionism in Western Europe in recent years has taken place in the *absence* of extra-parliamentary mobilisations on a scale which can produce soviet-type bodies that can be counterposed directly to the class collaboration of the reformist bureaucracies. It is therefore vitally necessary to confront Popular Frontism in the context of parliamentary politics through principled electoral opposition to coalitionism, thereby drawing the class line between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie with the greatest clarity. Only an organisation which is capable of drawing this line can act as a firm pole of opposition in the workers' movement to the class collaboration of coalitionism.

(10) *The oppression of women*—The crisis of proletarian leadership must be resolved through sharp political warfare against all tendencies which would *mislead* the working class. The WSL's abject failure to tackle this job in the Women's Liberation Movement (a failure which derives from the Healyites' economist and male-chauvinist disdain for the struggle against the oppression of women) abandons women who are

politicised through their particular oppression in bourgeois society to the leadership of feminists (both openly bourgeois and 'socialist'), revisionists and reformists. As Lenin stated in *What is to be Done?*, a revolutionary must seek to be 'the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects' (Lenin, *Collected Works*, volume 5, p. 423).

The oppression of women today is rooted in the bourgeois family, an essential economic and social unit of capitalism. In our intervention in the women's movement we must seek to win the best elements to the understanding that only through proletarian revolution will it be possible to create the material conditions for the replacement of the family and the ending of the oppression of women. We stand for an aggressive intervention into the Women's Liberation Movement against the infinite number of petit-bourgeois utopian 'solutions' to the question of women's oppression. Our objective must be to build a *communist women's movement*, based on the Transitional Programme and linked to the revolutionary party through its leading cadre.

(11) *The national question*—We uphold the Leninist position on the national question. Basing ourselves on the fundamental democratic principle of the equality of all nations and peoples, we recognise the right of all nations to self-determination. However, the recognition of this right by no means predetermines our attitude to every particular national question. In some cases the right of self-determination for nations must be subordinated to other, higher principles—such as the defence of a workers' state. We would not, for example, support the right of a bourgeois-led Ukrainian nationalist movement to separate from the Soviet Union, regardless of popular support. In other cases, for example Scotland, we are for the *right* of self-determination, but call on the Scottish people to exercise that right by choosing to stay in the same state as the other peoples of Britain.

The recognition of the right to self-determination in no way implies support to nationalism, a thoroughly bourgeois ideology completely counterposed to the interests of the proletariat, unable indeed to even accomplish the basic bourgeois democratic tasks which, in this epoch, can only be achieved through proletarian revolution. While we support any anti-imperialist actions of nationalist movements (unless they are merely acting as the instruments of a rival imperialist power) our main task with regard to the nationalist movements of the various oppressed peoples of the world is to separate the working masses from the petit-bourgeois nationalist leaderships. By championing the right of self-determination, the revolutionary vanguard can counter the attempts of the nationalists to portray the oppressor people as a monolithic whole, thus undermining divisions in the working class along national lines and sharpening the fundamental international conflict in capitalist society—the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

(12) *Ireland*—A correct approach to the complex national question in Ireland must begin with the recognition of the simple fact that there is no single 'Irish nation'. The Loyalist Protestant majority in the Six Counties, although not at this point in history itself a nation, is a people separate from the Catholics with whom they share the region. The oppressed minority Catholic grouping is an extension of the Catholic Irish nation which has achieved a deformed and partial self-determination in the Republic of the South. Consequently the slogan of 'self-determination for the Irish people as a whole' is either meaningless or is a backhanded way of siding with the nationalism of the Catholics against the Protestants *as a people*. Instead of cutting across the division between the two communities to allow the development of class struggle the slogan merely *exacerbates* the division by counterposing the Northern Catholics to the Protestants (who will resist forced unification arms in hand).

Our attitude to the Protestant working class must be based on the Marxist understanding that their objective interests are counterposed to those of both the Orange bourgeoisie and British imperialism. However this objective contradiction has been suppressed through most of recent Irish history and the Protestant workers have been led to identify with their own masters through the legitimate fear of being forcibly incorporated into a Catholic-dominated united bourgeois Ireland within which they would be an oppressed minority. It is this fear, far more than any material privileges, which has produced the virulent Loyalism of the masses of the Protestant proletariat today. Those who close their eyes to the reality of this key barrier to class consciousness among Protestant workers will be unable to mobilise them as part of a united proletariat and in effect hand them over, in advance, to their present reactionary Loyalist leadership.

We are against any forced unification of Ireland under a bourgeois regime. Only under the rule of the working class can the conflicting interests of the intermingled communities in the North be resolved in a democratic manner. We are unconditionally opposed to British

imperialism's occupation of the North and call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. We fight against the oppression of the Catholics and support actions of the Catholic nationalists which are aimed against imperialism, or are in genuine self-defence, while opposing sectarian anti-working-class communal terror directed at either population. Only integrated workers' militias built in the course of a united *class* struggle against imperialism and its agents (a struggle which can only be led by a Leninist party) can successfully defeat sectarian terror.

(13) *The state*—On certain key questions the leadership reveals a reformist attitude to the state. This attitude takes the form of promoting the belief that under pressure from the Labour Party, the trade unions or both, the capitalist state can be neutralised or even made to act in the interests of the working class.

(a) *Imperialist arms to South Africa*—Just as a number of tendencies supported sending troops to Northern Ireland in 1969 and in 1974 the American SWP began to advocate sending troops to Boston, the WSL today calls on British imperialism to intervene militarily in South Africa by dispatching arms to the black nationalist forces (*Socialist Press* 37, 41, 44). The illusion that British imperialism administered by a Labour government can be forced to aid the struggles of the black masses is not so far from endorsement of the Labour-Liberal coalition government's proposals to send a 'peacekeeping force' to Rhodesia.

(b) *The police*—The NC majority has rejected the Marxist position on the question of the police. By refusing to oppose *on principle* the organisation of police for better pay and conditions and the admission of police 'unions' into the TUC, the NC majority leaves the door open for future support to demands for 'improved working conditions' for capital's professional thugs and for supporting their 'rights' to membership in the workers' organisations. To the NC's apparent hopes of being able to neutralise the police *as part of the state* we counterpose the most basic proposition of revolutionary Marxism—the necessity to smash the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie.

(c) *The fascists*—The equivocation of certain leading NC members over the question of Labour Council bans on fascist meetings betrays a similar mentality—that the state under the 'control' of the Labour Party can be made to operate as something other than an organ of capitalist class rule.

(14) *Programme first*—The WSL is in chaos. It has no clear idea of its tasks or direction. The organisation struggles to maintain a weekly paper which is grossly out of proportion to the financial and human resources possessed. The numerical growth of the organisation, which is increasingly touted as the solution to all ills, shows no sign of materialising.

This situation has a political origin—to put it bluntly the movement as yet lacks any programmatic basis for existence as a distinct political tendency. Every political current from Trotskyism to reformism is represented on the NC and among the membership. For too long the leadership has tried to relegate the resolution of outstanding political questions to the background by promoting one scheme after another (the CDLM, the weekly press) each of which in turn was supposed to solve the political problems of the movement through spectacular breakthroughs in mass work. Today the leadership is still unable to address the manifest crisis of the movement with more than routine organisational measures—voluntaristic exhortations to the membership to work harder, to 'follow through' interventions, sell more papers and recruit more raw contacts. All these are not enough; neither is it enough for the leadership to prate about 'method' by which it means getting close to the mass movement of the working class, adopting a programmatically vague attitude of generalised hostility to the trade-union bureaucracy and showing more thoroughness in political work.

A disciplined combat party of professional revolutionaries can only be forged on the basis of agreement on programme. Conversely any political organisation which lacks a clear and coherent programme must inevitably take on the characteristics of a swamp. The primary reason that the leadership has not been able to create a politically hardened cadre nor even lay out a clear set of priorities for the organisation is that it is itself unclear and divided over key political questions. This is reflected in *Socialist Press* where virtually anything that is handed in gets printed and readers can frequently see counterposed political positions presented in different articles on the same question. Somehow, dealing with political questions or elaborating programmatic positions is always shoved to the bottom of the list of priorities. Consequently it is impossible for the leadership to give importance to the training of members in political struggle. Instead members must be exhorted by the leadership to hide from the political problems by throwing themselves into frenetic 'mass' work without any perspectives, and sales of a newspaper without any clear line. It is no wonder the movement is in bad shape.

At this point in its history the WSL is at a crossroads. Only by a determined struggle for programme (and this means in the first place a determined struggle within the

movement over political line) is it possible to make any progress at all in a revolutionary direction.

(15) *The fetishisation of organisational forms*—As a substitute for programme, and for the struggle for programme as the road to an international, there is a distinct tendency in the movement to pose as strategically crucial various specific organisational forms which are supposed to have some inherently revolutionary content, irrespective of the level of class struggle at which they are produced, or the leadership and programme which guide them. With neither a revolutionary programme nor the possibility of becoming real organisations of the masses, the 'price committees', 'Councils of Action', or whatever, which the WSL would agitate for today can be nothing better than a diversion in the course of the class struggle and can have nothing to do with the real organs of dual power that will be built in the coming turmoil of pre-revolutionary class struggle. Trotsky's dissection of some ILP positions is appropriate. He starts by quoting their erroneous theses:

... "The workers' councils will arise in their final form in the actual revolutionary crisis, but the party must

consistently prepare for their organization" [Trotsky's italics]. Keeping this in mind, let us compare the attitude of the ILP toward the future councils with its own attitude toward the future International. "... the form which the reconstructed International will take will depend upon historic events and the actual development of the working class struggle." On this ground the ILP draws the conclusion that the question of the International is purely "theoretical," i.e., in the language of empiricists, unreal. ... The theses turn the actual tasks of the party upside down. The councils represent an *organizational form*, and only a *form*. There is no way of "preparing for" councils except by means of a correct revolutionary policy applied in all spheres of the working class movement: there is no special, specific "preparation for" councils. It is entirely otherwise with the International. While the councils can arise only on the condition that there is a revolutionary ferment among the many-millioned masses, the International is always necessary: both on holidays and weekdays, during periods of offensive as well as in retreat, in peace as well as in war. The International is not at all a "form," as flows from the utterly false formulation of the ILP. The International is first of all a *program*, and a system of *strategic, tactical, and organizational* methods that flow from it. By dint of historic circumstances the question of the British councils is deferred for an indeterminate period of time. But the question of the International, as well as the question of national parties, cannot be deferred for a single hour: we have here in essence two sides of one and the same question. Without a Marxist International, national organisations, even the most advanced, are doomed to narrowness, vacillation, and helplessness; the advanced workers are forced to feed upon surrogates for internationalism." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1935-36], 2nd edition, p. 146-7)

The Re-creation of the Fourth International

(16) *Party-building and the struggle against centrism*—A revolutionary party capable of giving direct leadership to large numbers of workers is impossible without the existence of a firm cadre—a central core of *professional revolutionaries* at all levels of leadership in the party. Given the destruction of the Fourth International by Pabloism the concrete job that we have is the construction of such a cadre—the nucleus of a vanguard party—which must be trained through an all-round political conflict with hostile political tendencies, upholding the party's reason for existence—the programme for power. The further development of theory and programme, indeed, comes out of this political struggle.

The approach of the WSL leadership directs the membership away from conflict with our immediate competitors of the centrist and revisionist groups and continually threatens the liquidation of our cadre through their chaotic and fraudulent 'agitational' perspectives.

(a) *Regroupment*—Without a determined fight to politically destroy one's opponents it is impossible to establish an organisation that is a real pole in the political life of the workers' movement. In this struggle we will win individuals and groups from other tendencies to the revolutionary programme, resulting in splits among our enemies and crucial additions to our forces. It is always the case that a revolutionary organisation gathers cadre through winning leftward-moving tendencies in other political parties, in the fight for the Marxist programme.

Revolutionaries today, like the Left Oppositionists of the 30's, will not assemble their initial forces primarily through a strategy of direct recruitment of trade-union militants whom we have been able to lead in struggle, but through a central emphasis on the struggle to win subjectively revolutionary elements in the workers' movement through the power of our ideas, of our programme.

(b) *Priorities*—No small organisation can perform all the possible tasks it faces, or work in all arenas open to it, so it must be through careful delineation of priorities that a responsible leadership develops perspectives appropriate to the organisation. As Cannon said:

... the adoption of a correct political program... alone does not guarantee victory. ... the group [must] decide correctly what shall be the nature of its activities, and what tasks it shall set itself, given the size and capacity of the group, the period of the development of the class struggle, the relation of forces in the political movement, and so on." (*The History of American Trotskyism*, p. 80)

(17) *Building an international tendency*—Inevitably the planlessness and inconsistency of the WSL's work in Britain is accompanied by a parochial and light-minded attitude to the central task of Trotskyists today: the re-creation of the Fourth International.

Unable to build an anti-revisionist, democratic centralist international tendency on the basis of a clear programmatic attitude to the basic tasks of revolutionaries in this epoch and the decisive issues of the class struggle internationally (opposition to popular frontism, defence of the deformed workers' states, political struggle against nationalism and the necessity to re-create the Fourth International), the central leadership has led the WSL into a world of rotten blocs, cover-ups, diplomacy and intrigue—masquerading as the fight to 'reconstruct' the Fourth International. The struggle for programme has been discounted in the WSL's very limited international work.

(a) *The WSL's international relations*—The WSL, the CIL, and the SL(DC) are grouped together by a common past in the IC and a shared enthusiasm for liquidationist 'mass work'. The fact that the CIL are Pabloites and the

SL(DC) are lower-than-reformist wretches who stand in the tradition of one Albert Weisbord against Cannon and Trotsky has not in the least disturbed the tranquillity of this cozy non-aggression pact. *There has been no serious accounting whatsoever of the programme and record of these organisations.* The only work carried out abroad by the WSL, in Turkey, has in the past been characterised by a total lack of information or discussion with the WSL. The leadership document on the Turkish work shows it to be opportunist, adventurist, Bundist and in opposition to the leadership's stated desire to build a democratic centralist international tendency.

(b) *The United Secretariat*—The current focus of the leadership's international attentions is the Pabloite United Secretariat. Here in Britain a taste has been acquired for cozying up to the IMG, exemplified by the sweaty exertions to obtain its endorsement for the third CDLM conference.

While the present uneven and semi-conscious course towards unity with the United Secretariat runs counter to the WSL's formally anti-Pabloite stance, in reality there is no good political reason why the leadership should not be able to find itself a home in the all-encompassing swamp which is the United Secretariat. The entire thrust of the document 'The Poisoned Well' despite the promised amendments is to attempt to straighten out what the leadership sees as 'methodological' weaknesses of the thoroughly reformist American SWP so as to better equip it for the fight against the centrist ex-International Majority Tendency wing. If agreement can be reached on the uncontentious theses at the end of the document, then the 'reunification' (sic) discussions can begin. *The EC of the WSL is taking the organisation down the road to liquidation into the United Secretariat.*

Until the political line of the present document has been accepted and assimilated and the organisation redirected towards a correct revolutionary perspective, we strenuously oppose any intervention into the XIth World Congress of the United Secretariat. Similarly we call for a public break with the CIL and SL(DC) and a thorough public critique of their bankrupt positions.

In contrast to the air of urgency surrounding the reply to the IMG's regroupment letter the EC took it upon itself to refuse point blank any discussion with the Pabloite ICL which is not part of the United Secretariat.

(c) *The Spartacists*—The international Spartacist tendency, the only organisation to reply to the document 'Fourth International: Problems and Tasks', has—more than a year-and-a-half later—not yet been accorded an answer. At the last WSL conference a now-buried amendment was passed, recognising the principled position of the Revolutionary Tendency (the predecessor of the Spartacist tendency) in the American SWP in the early sixties. In its fifteen years of independent existence since then the Spartacists have proved their seriousness and have, to our knowledge, committed no betrayals of principle. It is urgent that we seek to test out this anti-Pabloite tendency through a process of discussions, which must explore the possibilities for reaching programmatic agreement and moving towards fusion.

(18) *The re-creation of the Fourth International*—The re-creation of the Fourth International means the establishment of Trotskyism as the political tendency with unique authority in the international proletariat as the revolutionary alternative to the Social Democratic and Stalinist reformists.

The central obstacle to this is the United Secretariat, whose size, geographical spread and verbal 'Trotskyism' give it a significance in the workers' movement internationally which can only be done away with through its political defeat and organisational destruction. The Fourth International will be re-built not by making friendly overtures to the Pabloites, not by passing around them and not by ignoring them but only through implacable aggressive opposition to both wings of the United Secretariat.

Only a hardened Leninist cadre organisation, determined to fight for its programme 'against the stream' will be capable of resolving the crisis of leadership of the working class by triumphing over the welter of treacherous centrist and reformist misleaders whose influence today constitutes the most important obstacle to proletarian revolution internationally. Those who capitulate to the Labourite illusions of the British working class; who yearn for 'détente' with the Pabloite revisionists; who seek to subordinate questions of programme and principle to the petty organisational chicanery of the 'mass method' will never be able to forge the nucleus of the future World Party of Socialist Revolution. We must set ourselves the task of building that party!

'Program first! "Mass paper"? Revolutionary action? Regroupment? Communes everywhere?... Very well, very well... But program first! Your political passports, please, gentlemen! And not false ones, if you please—real ones! If you don't have any, then pipe down!' (Trotsky, The Crisis of the French Section [1935-36], p. 119, ellipses in original)

Alastair Green (Birmingham) Joe Quigley (Manchester)
Alan Holford (Birmingham) Jim Short (West London)

16 January 1978

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Defend Cowley 9!

In an unprecedented move which, if successful, would constitute a major defeat for car workers in Britain, officials of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) in Oxford have recommended that Alan Thornett (leader of the centrist Workers Socialist League—WSL) be expelled from membership in the union and eight other union militants at the Cowley plant of British Leyland be disciplined for 'bringing the union into disrepute'. The local labour skates have also carefully included in their lineup two noted right wingers, Reg Parsons and Cy Blake, in a transparent attempt to give the witchhunt against the left the appearance of impartiality.

'Bringing the union into disrepute' is the standard catch-all charge used universally to pillory trade-union militants. In fact, this attack on the left is being made at this time because the company and its union henchmen are afraid of opposition to the layoff and speed-up scheme recently announced by Michael Edwardes, chief executive of the state-owned British Leyland enterprise.

The recommendations for disciplinary action arose out of an 'enquiry' held by the T&GWU's Oxford District Finances and General Purposes Committee last November. The enquiry was nothing short of a kangaroo court. The hand-picked Regional and District bureaucrats who laid the charges also conducted the hearings and recommended the final sentences!

It is clear that management and its labour lieutenants are determined to oust Thornett and the amorphous left wing which constitutes the major opposition at the key Cowley plant to Leyland's 'rationalisation' scheme.

Alan Thornett has been a shop steward in the Cowley plant for the past 16 years. He is also chairman of the T&GWU 5/293 Branch. In May 1974 Leyland management withdrew negotiating facilities from him and refused to recognise him as an elected trade-union representative, and after a massive red-scare campaign in the bourgeois press the leadership of the T&GWU held fresh elections in which Thornett lost his post as deputy convenor. But last December he was reelected in a shop-floor ballot—and still management refused to recognise him, yet the union tops did nothing to secure his recognition!

The defence of the Cowley stewards depends on the ability of the victimised militants to mobilise the ranks in their support. In situations such as this, where obvious violations of elementary democratic procedures are occurring, there is pressure to fight the union's bureaucratism through the bourgeois courts. In fact, Frank Corti, one of the nine militants and Secretary of the T&GWU 5/293, has already attempted—unsuccessfully—to force cancellation of the disciplinary hearings by means of a High Court injunction on the grounds that such hearings would be 'biased' and 'unfair'. Taking the union into the capitalist courts is asking the class enemy to meddle in the affairs of the workers movement—and even to arbitrate intra-union disputes! The bourgeois state will not protect union democracy but simply further subordinate the labour movement to the ruling class.

While sharply disagreeing with the minimal trade unionism passed off by Thornett as the programme of revolutionary Trotskyism, the Spartacist League (British section of the international Spartacist tendency) recognises that should Leyland management or its local labour cronies succeed in driving Thornett out of the T&GWU and consequently out of Cowley, this would constitute an important defeat for British workers.

Drop the charges! Halt the disciplinary hearings! No reliance on the courts! The T&GWU must force Leyland to recognise Thornett now! ■

Trotskyism...

(continued from page 7)

which is clearly before the membership as it carries out its work, question of inner party democracy and leadership). I have come to the conclusion that their approach to the Labour Party has the virtue of at least according with the real situation in the working class, and the fact that the Labour Party is losing support very rapidly—they see work directed at the LP as having the purpose of splitting and winning advanced workers through grappling with the turns in the objective situation and the manoeuvres of the reformists, while maintaining clearly the necessity for a Trotskyist party in front of the working class. On the trade unions their idea of the trade union caucus seems to provide the possibility of a genuine growth and the serious training of a new leadership without liquidation or opportunism, which the CDLM to me represents. Again on Ireland they have seriously confronted the problems presented by the particular form which the national question takes (not a new position incidentally, and indicative of their ability to confront major theoretical questions concretely and in relation to the world political situation).

'I saw... at Grunwicks on Monday. They asked me if I had any questions on their politics or things I couldn't understand. I was in the uncomfortable position of having to say that I could quite see the logic of their positions.... This was the only formulation that I could come up with to actually forestall a discussion over points which I agreed with any way. That made me realise that I have a responsibility to face up to their existence and my essential agreement with them. From now on I intend to fight for their politics inside the WSL.'

As the document on 'The Coalition, "Make the Lefts Fight" and the Workers' Government Slogan' went through successive drafts over two months the discussions within what had been an amorphous left wing of the WSL showed a growing political differentiation. By the time the jointly written document was submitted it was apparent that the signatories were on the verge of a parting of political paths. The majority (represented by Green, Holford, Quigley and Short) were coming to the conception that, while it was conceivable that much of the WSL membership and even a section of the leadership could possibly be won to the revolutionary programme, this could only be done through the process of insurrecting against the WSL's Healyite-derived practice and tradition, which had to be destroyed.

Murray and Kellett, however, pulled back sharply and went on to play a dishonourable role as a left cover for the WSL leadership, sharing many of the programmatic positions of the Trotskyist Faction but subordinating these to their desire not to break with Thornett. This political differentiation was extremely important because it ruptured the personal ties between the ex-I.S./RCGers, establishing unambiguously that programme comes first. Within a short period after this break with the Murray clot the TF had produced its comprehensive political statement, 'In Defence of the Revolutionary Programme'.

INDORP provided for the first time what the WSL had lacked from the beginning, a coherent Trotskyist programme and perspective. It took up many of the questions raised by the iSt letter of June 1976 (Cuba, history of the IC, trade-union policy, 'make the lefts fight') and other key issues facing a revolutionary vanguard in Britain, notably the Irish question (see more below). It also drew a sharply critical balance sheet of the WSL's incompetent and opportunist international work:

'Unable to build an anti-revisionist, democratic centralist international tendency on the basis of a clear programmatic attitude to the basic tasks of revolutionaries in this epoch and the decisive issues of the class struggle internationally (opposition to popular frontism, defence of the deformed workers' states, political struggle against nationalism and the necessity to re-create the Fourth International), the central leadership has led the WSL into a world of rotten blocs, cover-ups, diplomacy and intrigue—masquerading as the fight to "reconstruct" the Fourth International.'

In the WSL, 'international work' is mainly an extra-curricular activity, and at least some of its international connections have been made without directives by the NC by one comrade who uses his holidays to make political contacts outside this tight little island. Mostly the WSL should just be embarrassed by its international 'co-thinkers', the contemptible Socialist League (Democratic-Centralist) (SL[DC]) of the U.S. (referred to in INDORP as 'lower-than-reformist wretches who stand in the tradition of one Albert Weisbord against Cannon and Trotsky') and the Pabloist Greek Communist International League (CIL), which last year was engaged in 'unity' manoeuvres with the local USec section.

However, the WSL is not content with such small fry and is quietly stalking the big game of 'the world Trotskyist movement'. With his reputation and history, Thornett reasons, he should be able to reach an accommodation with Mandel & Co. or someone in the big time. Currently the WSL is entertaining leading representatives of the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI). (Thornett's documents inside the WRP contain sections which closely parallel the OCI conception of a strategic united front.)

While the WSL is not attracted by the total liquidation into the Labour Party of the Blick-Jenkins (British pro-OCI) group—since this would eliminate the independent cheerleading squad to hail Thornett's work at Cowley—their natural resting place in the ostensibly Trotskyist

milieu would most likely be as part of an ex-IC conglomeration within the USec, centring on the American SWP. Confirmation of appetites in this direction can be seen in the *Socialist Press* (8 March 1978) article on the recent French legislative elections, which replicates the OCI position of calling for votes to the Communist and Socialist Parties (part of the popular front Union of the Left) not only on the decisive second round of voting but on the first round as well.

A contribution to the pre-conference discussion by the WSL leadership purported to offer its orientation to 'the world Trotskyist movement'. The document, entitled 'The Poisoned Well' ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 1, January 1978), presents a version of the degeneration of the Fourth International heavily flavoured by the WSL's workerist perspective. But the key, as the TF pointed out, is that:

'The entire thrust of the document "The Poisoned Well" despite the promised amendments is to attempt to straighten out what the leadership sees as "methodological" weaknesses of the thoroughly reformist American SWP so as to better equip it for the fight against the centrist ex-International Majority Tendency wing [of the USec]. If agreement can be reached on the uncontentious theses at the end of the document then the "reunification" (sic) discussions can begin. *The EC [Executive Committee] of the WSL is taking the organisation down the road to liquidation into the United Secretariat.* [emphasis in original] ('In Defence of the Revolutionary Programme')

At the February conference the WSL central leadership tried to claim that the most egregiously capitulationist references to the American SWP and the USec were 'slips of the pen', and submitted amendments to sanitise their document. Alan Holford of the TF dismissed this by pointing out that *four single-spaced pages* of amendments hardly constituted 'slips'. In the debate *Socialist Press* editor Lister said that while he was not opposed in principle to characterising the USec as centrist, to say so in writing would preclude an invitation to the USec congress, thereby rendering the WSL's prospects 'very small'. Some prospects!

The WSL's attitude towards the Pabloist United Secretariat was accurately captured by Holford in a quote from Laurence Sterne which he included in his presentation as minority reporter: 'Courtship consists in a number of quiet attentions, not so pointed as to alarm nor so vague as not to be understood.'

A Class Line vs. Left Republicanism on Ireland

One of the consequences of the blinkered Cowley-centred economism of the Thornett leadership was that for the first three years of its existence the WSL has not had a position on the Irish question—of crucial importance for any organisation with pretensions of providing revolutionary leadership to the workers of the British Isles. In order to plug this rather embarrassing gap in its programme, the leadership established an Irish Commission which was charged with developing a position for the WSL. In the course of the political struggle within the WSL three members of this four-man commission came to agreement on a class-struggle programme for Ireland paralleling the unique position of the iSt. This was presented as the Trotskyist Faction document 'No Capitulation to Nationalism: For a Proletarian Perspective in Ireland!' ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 13, February 1978).

In recoiling from the anti-sectarian, proletarian position of the Spartacist tendency, the WSL wholeheartedly embraced the kind of pseudo-socialist 'Republican' position on Ireland common to most of the British fake-Trotskyist groupings. The Thornett leadership's document attempted to step around the difficult problem posed by the existence of the separate Protestant people (who comprise 60 percent of the population of the six counties of Northern Ireland and a quarter of the population of the island as a whole) by simply ignoring it and putting forward a call for 'self-determination for the Irish people as a whole'.

The TF document pointed out that such a call 'is meaningless precisely because there is no sense in which we can speak of the [Irish] people as a whole', and challenged the vicarious green nationalists of the WSL leadership to 'face up to the implications of such a programme. It is in effect a call for the forcible unification of the whole island by the Irish bourgeoisie irrespective of the wishes of the Protestant community', a move which 'could only precipitate a bloody communal conflict offering nothing for the proletariat'. The majority document clearly confirmed the WSL's alignment with mainstream petty-bourgeois Irish Republicanism:

'We do not argue as such for a united capitalist Ireland. But it must be clear that were such an unlikely development brought about in the course of struggle it would represent an historically progressive development.' [emphasis in original] ('Outlines of a Programme for Ireland', *ibid.*)

The Trotskyist Faction document rejected the leadership's open support to Catholic Irish nationalism, stating that: 'We are AGAINST THE FORCED UNIFICATION OF IRELAND UNDER BOURGEOIS RULE.' Instead it raised the algebraic call for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. The TF stated clearly that the struggle to unite the Protestant and Catholic working

people across sectarian lines must be premised on inflexible opposition to the continuing oppression of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and also on a fight for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. However, the TF document added:

...the removal of the troops, unless a class-conscious proletariat led by a revolutionary party is able to intervene, may well be the occasion for enormous sectarian slaughter (as occurred in India after independence) but as Marxists we must reject out of hand the reformist proposition that imperialist troops can ever be a fundamental guarantee against barbarism. The continuation of British imperialism's military occupation of the north is even more inimical to the prospect for socialism than the slaughter which might follow its departure. ('For a Proletarian Perspective in Ireland!')

In the debate on Ireland at the conference one Thornett supporter after another rose to speak in defence of the majority's sketchy but clearly Catholic nationalist document, yet felt it necessary to preface their remarks by admitting they knew little about Ireland. In contrast, the position of the Trotskyist Faction, drawing on the considerable collective experience of its members in the struggle in Ireland, was presented by Paul Lannigan, a former member of the Irish National Committee of Healy's SLL from 1968 to 1970. Lannigan, who had first-hand experience in recruiting Protestant shop stewards in Derry to the SLL, opposed the leadership's 'socialist' green nationalism, which effectively denies the possibility of revolutionaries being able to win Protestant workers to an anti-sectarian, socialist programme.

Mass Work Fakery, Menshevism and Bundism in Turkey

With the exception of its loose ties to the Greek CIL and the American SL(DC), the WSL's only work outside Britain has taken place in Turkey. Beginning with a few Turkish members recruited from the WRP, the WSL recruited a handful of raw militants and established two small branches in Turkey. In every respect the Turkish work was a criminal fiasco as a minuscule grouping of politically uneducated militants attempted to translate the WSL's 'mass work' approach from chummy England into the harsh reality of Turkish society where labour and leftist militants are regularly set upon and often murdered by fascist thugs.

The Trotskyist Faction recruited two members of the WSL's Turkish group in London who recounted the bitter experience of a strike (for union recognition) sparked by the Turkish WSLers: 'We were totally ill-prepared to give even good trade union leadership to back up our advice to these workers' ('Enough of Opportunism, Adventurism, Bundism: For a Trotskyist Perspective in Turkey', [WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 12, February 1978). But the WSL leadership wasn't taken aback. True, the majority document admitted, 'the strike was isolated, was broken, and all the strikers were sacked'. However, 'Though the battle was lost, our comrades were developed and new contacts won' ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 6, February 1978)!

Having experienced the dead-end posed by the WSL's economist activism, these two militants came to fundamental agreement with the Trotskyist Faction's insistence on the centrality of programmatic clarity and the struggle to educate and recruit cadre as key to building the revolutionary party. Thus the TF Turkish document attacked the leadership's Bundist approach to the national question as applied to the Kurds (a national minority presently divided among Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and the USSR). According to the WSL majority the Kurds must achieve 'national unity first', i.e., the establishment of a bourgeois Kurdistan; consequently Kurdish workers living in Turkey must be organised into a separate Kurdish party. Recognising the Kurds' right to self-determination, the TF document attacked this Bundist organisational norm and Menshevik two-stage strategy.

On the thorny Cyprus question the faction took a clear internationalist position:

'Up until 1974, the Turkish population of Cyprus was nationally oppressed by the Greek population—since the invasion by the Turkish army, the Greeks have been in the more oppressed position. Because the two populations have been thoroughly intermingled on this small island it is clear that the reality of "self-determination" for either people can only come at the expense of the other and thus "self-determination" is not applicable. We call therefore for the withdrawal of all foreign troops (whether Turk, Greek, UN, NATO, or any other) and for the unity of Greek and Turkish working peoples of Cyprus to overthrow capitalism and establish a workers state under the leadership of a Trotskyist party.' ('Enough of Opportunism, Adventurism, Bundism...')

Thornett 'Counterattacks'

For the longest time the Thornett leadership sought to ignore the international Spartacist tendency. After a year's procrastination the WSL's sometime resident literary dilettante, Adam Westoby, finally produced a draft reply to the June 1976 iSt letter. This work was so blatantly unserious that the WSL NC rejected it in summer 1977. Since Westoby had left the organisation to pursue his 'theoretical' activity, the job of drafting a new reply was commissioned out to someone else—whose

work was rejected for being too soft on the iSt. Finally leadership loyalists John Lister and Tony Richardson produced their own reply—with a little help from their friends in the Murray clique. This shoddy document laconically remarks in the introduction: 'In compiling this material we have drawn on notes supplied by cdes. Steve Murray and Julia Kellett, though neither comrade has seen the completed document.'

(Having rejected the Trotskyist Faction's comprehensive political critique of the hardened right-centrist Thornett leadership, the Murray group slid into ignominious disarray at the national conference, with faction members splitting their votes and one even voting for a TF document. With a chronology reminiscent of the career of the vile Tim [I was a hatchet man for Healy and Hansen] Wohlforth, Murray's fence-straddling and unprincipled bloc with Thornett earned him only the political contempt of some of his own factional partners [and no doubt of the Thornett supporters as well].)

The Lister-Richardson-Murray 'reply' is a broken record stuck on the single refrain that the iSt is 'sectarian' because we recognise that 'a currently embryonic party organisation must necessarily constitute itself in the form of a "fighting propaganda group" and we frankly state that the character of our trade-union work must be 'exemplary', rejecting the workerist notion of intervening in every daily struggle of the masses. 'What type of forces will such a stand attract?' the Thornett group asks rhetorically, answering: 'Talkers, debaters, and those disillusioned with the struggle for leadership within workers' organisations...' ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 5, February 1978). At another point they wax indignant: 'Your refusal to fight to recruit workers... means that your role is reduced to that of political vultures, preying on other tendencies on the left.'

This absurd charge—reminiscent of Wohlforth at his nadir, when sputtering for lack of anything to say he would charge that Spartacists 'hate the workers'—is consummate dishonesty coming from authors who are not unfamiliar with *Workers Vanguard*. But at least the Thornett supporters make clear what it is they object to: the authors complain that the London Spartacist Group interventions in WSL public meetings 'seem determined to cut across any dialogue with [workers who attend these meetings] and drive them away from the WSL, turning every meeting into a debate on the most abstract level'.

And just what are these 'abstract' topics of debate? The same points that were the axis of the TF faction fight: the need to break from Labourism and illusions in the Labour 'lefts'; the need for a proletarian strategy in Ireland, to draw the class line against popular frontism. This is too 'abstract' for the Thornett group because they seek to recruit politically raw workers at their present level of consciousness, i.e., militant trade unionism. We, however, aspire to recruit workers who know and despise the IMG's line of Menshevik 'unity' or the SWP's refusal to defend the gains of the October Revolution.

The authors of the leadership 'reply' to the iSt get carried away with their self-righteous rhetoric about how the Spartacists would be repelled by the 'action of thousands and millions of workers mobilised in practical struggles around its [the Transitional Programme's] demands'. We are anxiously waiting to hear how the WSL has managed to mobilise these 'thousands and millions of workers' around even its reformist minimum program for the unions. In fact, at the conference Thornett admitted that the WSL had been unable to play much of a role in the firemen's strike because the much larger Cliffite SWP stood in the way. What the WSL did not do in this situation is polemicise against the SWP. As for trade-union implantation, the WSL has no significant fraction outside Cowley. This compares to the SL/U.S. which gives political support to active groups of class-struggle unionists among dock workers, steel workers, car workers, phone workers and seamen.

The one issue which seems to have stung the WSL central leadership into something resembling a political defence is the question of voting for popular front candidates and the nature of a workers government. John Lister's document, 'What the Fourth Congress of the Comintern Really Decided' ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 3, February 1978), is really just an attempt to institutionalise the confusion sown by Zinoviev and Radek in that discussion. If the WSL really wants to say that it considers a Labour Party cabinet resting on a majority in parliament to be a 'workers government'—this is one of Zinoviev's five variants—they are free to do so. We would only remind them of the company they are travelling in. One Pierre Frank, in a commemorative article on the Transitional Programme (*International Socialist Review*, May-June 1967), congratulated the Pabloist United Secretariat in having 'revived and enriched' the concept of workers government to mean something other than the dictatorship of the proletariat. As for the Spartacist tendency, it stands on the 'unrevised' programme of Trotsky's Fourth International, which states:

'This formula, "workers' and farmers' government", first appeared in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was definitely accepted after the October Revolution. In the final instance it represented nothing more than the

popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat...

'When the Comintern of the epigones tried to revive the formula buried by history of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry", it gave to the formula of the "workers' and peasants' government" a completely different, purely "democratic", i.e., bourgeois content, counterposing it to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Bolshevik-Leninists resolutely rejected the slogan of the "workers' and peasants' government" in the bourgeois-democratic version.' (*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*)

A slightly more serious attempt to deal with the question was made by Clinton, Hyde and White (a trio whose opening shots in the political struggle in the WSL were their arguments that the police deserved a 'sliding scale of wages'). Their document 'Strategy and Tactics—A Reply to Our Petty Bourgeois Critics', ([WSL] *Pre-Conference Discussion Bulletin* No. 10, February 1978) prints pages of citations to argue that Trotsky in the 1930's did not take an explicit position against voting for the workers parties in a popular front. What these scholastic 'theoreticians' ignore is that Trotsky faced situations in France and Spain which were pre-revolutionary, with parliamentary and electoral tactics quite secondary in the context of massive factory occupations and direct military struggle with the fascists. In France Trotsky urgently and repeatedly called for the formation of committees of action (in the context of a strike wave) as the vehicle for breaking the workers from the popular front and splitting the reformist parties.

Our snide academics don't mention this, nor does the WSL present any programmatic axis for struggle against the reformist parties and against bourgeois coalitionism. On the contrary it makes a ritual denunciation of the Lib-Lab coalition... and then promises to vote for Labour anyway. If ever there were a case of sterile propagandism, this is it. The French Pabloists were consistent, at least, in refusing to characterise the Union of the Left as a popular front; should they do so, said the Mandelites, 'This would lead logically to abstention in the [1977] municipal elections' (quoted in *International*, Summer 1977). The WSL's own policy—refusing to vote for coalitionist candidates only if joint Liberal-Labour slates are presented—is a purely juridical conception of the bloc, which implicitly or explicitly denies the essential fact: that the popular front is a *bourgeois* political formation. The left oppositionist document on the workers government slogan answered this subterfuge in advance with a quotation from Trotsky:

'The question of questions at present is the People's Front. The left centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical manoeuvre so as to be able to practice their little business in the shadow of the People's Front. In reality the People's Front is the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch. It offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism...' ('Letter to the RSAP', *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36*)

The heart of the Clinton-Hyde-White document is unadulterated class baiting: e.g., 'They appeal to tired petty bourgeois members who prefer academic debate to the class struggle...' etc. What drives these three (who, by the way, are themselves teachers) into a frenzy is the Trotskyist Faction's rejection of the guilty workerism which passes for politics in the WSL. Attempting to be condescending, they only articulate their own philistinism. Moreover, when they finally get around to justifying their all-purpose slogan 'Make the Lefts Fight', their mystical glorification of the 'daily grind' spells itself out in the language of frank opportunism:

'Until such time as significant sections of workers look to alternative revolutionary leaders, we must take the workers through the experience of trying and testing the alternatives that exist.' ('Strategy and Tactics...')

Just as revolutionaries begin with the objective needs of the proletariat rather than its present consciousness in formulating their program, we do not 'take' the proletariat through the experience of reformism. If they have not yet broken from the Stalinist and social-democratic misleaders we must indeed accompany them through the experience of *exposing* these betrayers. But the WSL does indeed mean to take British workers through a new experience of reformism—first the Callaghans and Healeys, then the Foots and Benns, and then....

Results and Prospects

In describing the loss of 20 per cent of its active membership as 'A Step Forward' (*Socialist Press*, 22 February), the Workers Socialist League declares its firm intent to continue in its ostrich-like position. As a result of the split by the Trotskyist Faction it has been reduced to a national network of supporters of Alan Thornett's activities at the Cowley Leyland plant (reverently dubbed 'The Factory' by the WSL leadership). The loss of a sizeable number of younger comrades has clearly stung them, as has the departure of a layer of experienced cadres; and the hemorrhaging of the WSL has not stopped yet.

For the international Spartacist tendency, the fusion with the comrades of the TF greatly increases the authority of our Trotskyist programme, in Britain and internationally. In Britain today there is one—and only one—organisation which intransigently fights coalitionism, opposes all brands of nationalism and is

part of a democratic centralist international tendency: the Spartacist League.

One parting reply to the WSL's embarrassingly empty class baiting: we do not wish to begrudge Alan Thornett his unstinting dedication to defending the interests of the Cowley workers as he perceives them. Under the proper leadership of a disciplined Trotskyist party such mass leaders can perform a crucial role in preparing the working class for revolutionary struggle. But such a party will be far different from the support apparatus for one or a group of trade unionists (the most degenerated example of the latter being the Ceylonese 'section' of the USec, which is nothing more than an appendage of a conservative white collar union run by the corrupt Bala Tampoe). It must be a party whose Marxist programme is formulated and tested through the kind of political struggle which the WSL has systematically avoided, whether in the factories, in mass demonstrations, public meetings or the party itself.

Yes the WSL conference was indeed a step forward—for Trotskyism and the international Spartacist tendency! It was a savage blow, however, to the pretensions of the parochial workerists from the South Midlands of little England. ■

Ireland...

(continued from page 16)

every national minority. We demand broad self-government and autonomy for regions, which must be demarcated, among other terms of reference, in respect of nationality too! (Draft Platform for the Fourth Congress of Social-Democrats of the Latvian Area, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 116)

We are in favour of the political equality of nations, concretely the right of national self-determination or the right of each nation to separate and establish its own state. Self-determination means no less and no more than that. The right to self-determination does not imply support to the revisionists' advocacy of the supposed 'right' of each nation to completely 'determine its own future'. When small nations in the imperialist epoch are totally dependent on a world market quite beyond their capacity to manipulate or control we must reject slogans such as 'No British plans for Ireland', 'Freedom from all outside interference and control' as expressions of petty-bourgeois romanticism.

Support for the right of self-determination in no way implies that we extend support to any kind of nationalism—in fact our opposition to national oppression is rooted in our desire to remove the question of national oppression from the historical agenda in order to sharpen the fundamental class antagonism and thus hasten the socialist revolution.

Leninists advocate only those democratic demands (such as the right of self-determination) which concretely serve to enlarge the democratic terrain and thereby facilitate the development of the class struggle. If a particular demand fails to do so there is no point in advancing it—indeed in some cases such a demand could retard the development of the class struggle. In the 'Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up' Lenin put it like this: 'The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute but only a *small part* of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) world movement. In individual concrete cases the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected.' (*Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 341)

The Protestant Population

In order to determine whether any application of the call for self-determination could advance the struggle for socialist revolution in Ireland we must first delineate the nature of the national problem there. The Protestant majority in the northeast is distinguished from the oppressed Catholic minority by the fact that they have a different religion, a distinct culture, their own social institutions (the Orange lodges, sporting and drinking clubs, newspapers, etc.) and a self-image based on the rejection of the existence of a single Irish nation. Are the Protestants therefore a separate nation? Are they merely agents of British imperialism? Or are they misguided members of the unitary Irish nation? The answer is that at this point in history the Protestants of the Six Counties do not fit into any of these simple categories. They are a community which has long been distinct, although its degree of separation from the Catholics has fluctuated, allowing both episodes of united class struggle, and at the other extreme, the last eight years of intense sectarian polarisation.

Many of the more sophisticated 'Marxist' apologists of republicanism—notably the Pabloites of the IMG—cite Connolly as their authority in describing the Protestant workers as simply a labour aristocracy. Lenin defined the labour aristocracy as a narrow upper stratum of the proletariat whose substantial material privileges derived from the imperialist bourgeoisie led them to identify their interests with those of their own bourgeoisie. The Protestants are not separated from the Catholics in a higher income group by a horizontal line across society,

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but are a community represented in all strata, even if they compose a proportionately smaller fraction at the lower end of the spectrum. The extension of the concept of labour aristocracy to the mass of Protestant workers in Ireland robs it of its Leninist meaning. The Protestant workers in the Six Counties 'share' in the lowest wages, highest unemployment and the poorest housing in the whole of the UK.

Attempts to ignore or deny the separate identity and interests of the Ulster Protestants through the familiar liberal plea that British or other socialists cannot tell the Irish how to wage their struggles or the argument that only the oppressed have rights should be rejected out of hand as petty-bourgeois moralism. The Protestants are neither a colonial administration (i.e., mere agents of British imperialism) nor simply a colonial extension of the motherland like the whites in Rhodesia, nor even a closed colour caste like the South African whites. Arguments that the Protestants should be accorded no democratic rights because they were originally settlers and/or because the present Six County state is an artificial imperialist creation are based ultimately on notions of nationalist irredentism and historical justice.

The Protestants are clearly not at this time a part of the Irish Catholic nation but a separate people, and any attempt by the Catholic bourgeoisie to forcibly incorporate this large and relatively well-armed community into a common state could only precipitate a bloody communal conflict offering nothing for the proletariat. However, the Protestants have not crystallised into a separate nation of their own either, and it would require considerable class-divisive bloodshed for them to impose their exclusive right to a territory capable of sustaining a nation-state.

The pseudo-Marxist apologists of Green nationalism in the British left attempt to smear those who recognise the existence of a distinct Protestant community in Northern Ireland with the charge of sharing the 'two-nation' theories and pro-imperialist positions of the British and Irish Communist Organisation (B&ICO). The B&ICO's belief that the Protestants are at this time a nation is not their only error. We completely reject the B&ICO's assertion that the reactionary Orange statelet of the North, created by the imperialist partition of 1920, represents the legitimate 'self-determination' of the Protestant population. We furthermore stand in total opposition to the B&ICO's reactionary position of open support to the imperialist occupation of northeast Ireland and its implicit support to the continuing oppression of the Catholic minority of the Six Counties.

The Protestants may yet be incorporated in a reformed Irish nation, which they would at present bitterly reject; they may become a separate nation of their own; or they may find a democratic accommodation with the Catholics outside the framework of strictly national solutions under the rule of the working class. Their destiny is not yet decided. But it is clear that there is a Protestant working class, and that those who turn their backs on it by ignoring its democratic rights have no real perspective for proletarian revolution in Ireland.

We reject the reactionary view that the Protestant workers are irredeemably lost and that only force will persuade them where their true interests lie. By posing as a precondition for their salvation the destruction of the Six County statelet, a stageist conception is advanced which suggests that national unity is a task which must be completed before the socialist tasks can be placed on the agenda. Those who reject the possibility that in future struggles for their common class interests Protestant workers may again unite with their Catholic brothers (as they have in the past) reveal a profoundly anti-revolutionary pessimism about the historic capacity of the proletariat, under revolutionary leadership, to transcend narrow sectional interests.

'Self-Determination for the Irish People as a Whole'?

The northeast of Ireland is one case (Palestine, Lebanon and Cyprus are others) where the right of the nation 'as a whole' to self-determination is, taken literally, meaningless precisely because there is no sense in which we can speak of the people as a whole. In reality there are two peoples intermingled in Ireland. The Protestant community comprises 60 per cent of the population of the Six Counties and 25 per cent of the population of the whole island.

In its early years the Communist International addressed analogous situations of intermingled populations. Speaking at the Second Congress of the Third International Comrade Mereshin argued that:

'The experience of the mutual relations between the majority and minority nationalities in territories with a mixed population (in the Ukraine, in Poland and in White Russia) has shown that the transfer of power from the hands of the big bourgeoisie into the hands of petty-bourgeois groups forming democratic republican states, does not reduce national tensions but on the contrary sharpens them in the extreme. The republican democracy, which is forced, in the struggle against the working class, to confuse the class struggle with national war, is quickly

permeated with national exclusiveness and easily adapts itself to the experience of older teachers of national oppression....

'...there are no "democratic" forms... that can secure the rights and the cultural interests of the national minorities in areas of mixed population in the republican-democratic order and guarantee true equality and equal influence on the course of the business of state. National personal autonomy based on universal suffrage, leads not only to the division of the proletariat into national groups, but also to the complete cessation of the revolutionary struggle and even to the worsening of the cultural position of the working class in the national minority.' (Second Congress of the Communist International, Vol. I, New Park, pp. 162-3)

In the northeast of Ireland with a Protestant majority amongst workers and small farmers we have to ask in what way does the demand for 'self-determination for the Irish people as a whole' advance the struggle for socialism? The answer is that it worsens it. It means driving the Orange workers, whose allegiance to their own bourgeoisie is fuelled by legitimate fears of submergence in the clerical-reactionary bourgeois republic of the south, even more securely into the arms of imperialism and reaction. It means creating the conditions for a conflict not along class lines but along communal lines. For proletarian internationalists this is a course that must be strenuously opposed.

Those who would advocate 'self-determination for the Irish people as a whole' or who would give rights solely to the Catholics must squarely face up to the implications of such a programme. It is in effect a call for the forcible unification of the whole island by the Irish bourgeoisie irrespective of the wishes of the Protestant community, i.e., a call for the Irish Catholics to self-determine at the expense of the Protestants. It is a call whose logic is simply to reverse the terms of oppression, and which necessarily implies inter-communal slaughter, forced population transfers and ultimately genocide. This is not the way forward to the Irish revolution. We are **AGAINST THE FORCED UNIFICATION OF IRELAND UNDER BOURGEOIS RULE.**

The Irish Catholic Nation and Its Nationalism

The limited, partial and deformed achievement of the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in Ireland is demonstrated by the clerical-reactionary regime in the south. We stand for the building of a Trotskyist party in southern Ireland which, based on the full Transitional Programme, must seek to lead the working class in the fight against the power of the Church, the oppression of women and the tying up of the land, a fight which can achieve victory only through the smashing of the bourgeois order.

While opposing on principle any possible future oppression of the Protestant population of Northern Ireland, revolutionaries stand against the pervasive oppression of the Catholic minority in the Six Counties today. The Catholics of the Northern Ireland statelet have been systematically discriminated against in housing, employment and education, and, since the intervention of the British Army in 1968, have additionally been subjected to the brutalities of an occupying imperialist army. The response of the Catholics has largely taken the form of Republicanism, Catholic nationalism. Our unambiguous hostility as communists to all forms of nationalism does not diminish in the slightest our struggle against the oppression of the Catholics and against the institutionalised discrimination of the Orange statelet. But it is our job to take the struggle against oppression out of the hands of the Republican misleaders, and this requires unremitting exposure of nationalism as an ideology.

There is no justification whatsoever for the claim (put forward by Maoists, Pabloites and various other revisionists) that the nationalism of the oppressed is

somehow inherently progressive. Lenin's hostility to nationalism is quite unambiguous:

'The class-conscious workers fight hard against every kind of nationalism, both the crude, violent, Black-Hundred nationalism and that most refined nationalism which preaches the equality of nations together with... the splitting up of the workers' cause, the workers' organisations and the working-class movement according to nationality. Unlike all the varieties of the nationalist bourgeoisie, the class-conscious workers, carrying out the decisions of the recent (summer 1913) conference of the Marxists stand, not only for the complete, consistent and fully applied equality of nations and languages but also for the amalgamation of the workers of the different nationalities in united proletarian organisations of every kind.

'Herein lies the fundamental distinction between the national programme of Marxism and that of any bourgeoisie, be it most "advanced"...

'To the bourgeoisie however the demand for national equality very often amounts in practice to advocating national exclusiveness and chauvinism; they very often couple it with advocacy of the division and estrangement of nations. This is absolutely incompatible with proletarian internationalism which advocates not only closer relations between nations but the amalgamation of the workers of all nationalities in a given state, in united proletarian organisations.' ('Corrupting the Workers with Refined Nationalism', Collected Works, Vol. 20, pp. 289-90) [Lenin's emphasis]

No nationalist ideology can be progressive in an epoch when the crisis of mankind demands a socialist solution that can only be realised on a world scale. One of the main accomplishments of capitalism is that by the creation of a world market it has laid the basis for a world economy and therefore eventually for a universal culture. As an ideology the nationalism of the oppressed is a protest against this historically progressive and necessary development. To the extent that nationalist resistance movements have a progressive role to play it is despite their ideology and not because of it. For, while the imperialists' subjection of backward territories brings them into the world market and holds up the mirror of their own future, the internal contradictions of imperialism operate as a fetter on the expansion of the forces of production. In fighting against their own national oppression nationalist movements aim blows against an imperialist system that is blocking society's further advance. In this sense the national movements of the various oppressed peoples of the world contribute to the forces fighting for socialism. That they do so however has nothing to do with their ideology, which is clearly counterposed to socialism.

The Leninist position on the national question recognises both the objectively anti-imperialist character of certain struggles led by petty-bourgeois nationalists and the inevitable attempts at some point of these same nationalists to seek an accommodation with imperialism at the expense of other nationalities, their own popular base or both. As Trotskyists we stand on the perspective of the Permanent Revolution—and hold that only the proletariat (led by its vanguard party) and standing at the head of the peasantry and other toiling masses is capable of giving the progressive content of the national liberation movements a consistent expression through the achievement of the socialist revolution.

The Trotskyist Programme for Ireland

Finally convinced that the 'Republican'-talking politicians in the South had neither plans for nor intentions of unifying the 'nation', the Catholics ended their fifty-year refusal to recognise the legitimacy of the Stormont government with a campaign for civil rights in 1968. The Protestants, whose conditions of existence are virtually as bleak and insecure, responded with an orgy of communal violence directed against beleaguered Catholic communities in Belfast and Derry.

There would no doubt have been many opportunities for principled united fronts between a revolutionary Leninist vanguard and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's in its campaign to END DISCRIMINATION IN JOBS AND HOUSING AGAINST THE CATHOLICS. While revolutionaries OPPOSE ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE CATHOLICS in the north the reformist demands of the Civil Rights movement, which were all posed within the framework of capitalist rationality, in effect amounted to demanding that the Protestants accept more unemployment and less housing. Without such demands as A SLIDING SCALE OF HOURS and A PROGRAMME OF PUBLIC WORKS the call to end discrimination can only imply levelling in an already economically depressed situation. In situations such as Northern Ireland the only prospect of transcending the vicious logic of national and communal antagonisms is through posing democratic demands against privilege and oppression within the framework of the FULL TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME.

We are resolutely opposed to the Protestant and Catholic churches as reactionary bulwarks of divisive obscurantism. The demand for UNIVERSAL, FREE, HIGH-QUALITY, SECULAR EDUCATION FOR ALL is essential to undermine the inculcation of communalism and demonstrate to the Protestants that we are as implacably opposed to the Catholic Church as we are to theirs. **AGAINST RELIGIOUS OBSCURANTISM!**

In 1969 British imperialism dispatched troops to

DEBATE

Spartacist League vs. International-Communist League

What programme for the socialist revolution?

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Friday, May 5th 7:00 pm

London

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Northern Ireland. It did so to prevent a massive outbreak of inter-communal warfare and so block the development of a social upheaval which might quickly have spread across the borders of the Six Counties to the Republic and into the metropolitan centres of British imperialism itself.

The British troops have no place in Ireland. Our programme starts from the demands **FOR THE IMMEDIATE, UNCONDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL OF ALL BRITISH TROOPS FROM IRELAND! FOR TRADE-UNION BLACKING OF TROOP TRANSPORT AND ALL GOODS AND SERVICES TO THE BRITISH ARMY IN IRELAND!** Failure to emphasise these demands in our real work in the mass organisations of the British working class would constitute a major betrayal of revolutionary politics. The removal of the troops, unless a class-conscious proletariat led by a revolutionary party is able to intervene, may well be the occasion for enormous sectarian slaughter (as occurred in India after independence) but as Marxists we must reject out of hand the reformist proposition that imperialist troops can ever be a fundamental guarantee against barbarism. The continuation of British imperialism's military occupation of the North is even more inimical to the prospect for socialism than the slaughter which might follow its departure. We reject the right that petty-bourgeois nationalism (Provisional Sinn Fein) grants to imperialism to set its own time for a phased withdrawal. No less do we oppose calls to restrict the troops to barracks or to leave the working class areas. While a Red Army that is the product of a successful proletarian insurrection in Britain might well turn out to be the only force capable of resolving the communal conflict in the

northeast of Ireland in an historically progressive fashion, we deny the right of the British imperialist army to be in any part of Ireland. Revolutionaries place no prior conditions on the demand for **BRITISH TROOPS OUT NOW!**

In line with our position to the British troops' presence in Ireland, we call for the smashing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and stand **FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM'S APPARATUS OF POLITICAL REPRESSION IN NORTHERN IRELAND—THE COURTS, THE GAOLS AND THE BOURGEOISIE'S ARMED BODIES OF MEN: THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY, AND THE ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT.**

We support the actions of the IRA directed against British imperialism without in any way supporting their programme, which in application would violate the democratic rights of the Protestants. Only programmatic independence from the political bankruptcy of petty-bourgeois nationalism and terrorism allows Bolsheviks to uncompromisingly solidarize with their struggles against imperialism and to defend them against imperialist repression.

The fact that sectarian terror stalks the northeast of Ireland, 'checked' only by brutal and illegitimate imperialist might, means that the call for **INTEGRATED, ANTI-SECTARIAN, ANTI-IMPERIALIST WORKERS MILITIAS**, which could exist only under the leadership of a revolutionary party, can be extremely powerful. While organised initially for the purpose of defending the oppressed from the violence of imperialism and its agents, these militias will provide the nucleus of the Red Army of the Workers Republic.

The situation of mixed peoples can only be resolved in a thoroughly democratic way within the perspective of Permanent Revolution. It is not possible to say in advance what role the Protestants will play—so that while the call for a 'united socialist republic' may seem to be the best solution to the problem, in fact its objective effect would be to exacerbate the existing tensions between the Protestants and their Catholic class brothers. In advancing the fight for the revolutionary programme it is our duty as communists to seek to address the national question in such a way as to neutralise national or communal antagonisms in order to bring to the fore the fundamental class conflicts in society. Thus, developing a revolutionary programme for the Irish revolution, we must take account of the Protestants' deeply felt alienation from the Catholic nation and raise the more flexible call for **A WORKERS REPUBLIC AS PART OF A SOCIALIST FEDERATION OF THE BRITISH ISLES, IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SOCIALIST UNITED STATES OF EUROPE. FOR TROTSKYIST PARTIES TO SMASH THE BOURGEOIS STATE POWERS OF THE BRITISH ISLES! FOR THE RE-CREATION OF A DEMOCRATIC CENTRALIST FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!**

Paul Lannigan (West London Branch; Irish Commission; Trotskyist Faction)
Joe Quigley (Manchester Branch; Irish Commission; Trotskyist Faction)
Jim Saunders (West London Branch; Irish Commission; Trotskyist Faction)

8 February 1978

Turkey...

(continued from page 5)

(national independence, a constituent assembly, the right to speak Kurdish, etc.) but must also point to the permanent character of the revolution.' [our emphasis]

This was even more clearly spelt out at the London aggregate on Turkey on Dec. 11 when Comrade H. stated that: 'The task before the Kurdish nation is not to unite with the Turkish proletariat but to achieve its national unity first.' At the aggregate Comrade H. was just repeating what was said by him at a conference on Kurdistan held in London in November. We do not accept permanent revolution as an *afterthought* for internal documents while the real activity of the organisation focuses only on **democratic demands**. In the words of the Transitional Programme:

'Democratic slogans, transitional demands, and the problems of the socialist revolution are not divided into separate historical epochs in this struggle, but stem directly from one another. The Chinese proletariat had barely begun to organize trade unions before it had to provide for soviets. In this sense, the present program is completely applicable to colonial and semicolonial countries, at least to those where the proletariat has become capable of carrying on independent politics.' (p. 137)

To argue that the Kurdish proletariat has not become capable of carrying on independent politics (as a class) would be to ignore the important potential which was shown by the post-World War II struggles of the Kirkuk oil workers.

Finally, we stand for the Leninist slogan of the right of the Kurds to self-determination and against the capitulation to nationalism which is embodied in the leadership's call for an *independent* Kurdistan. Lenin deals in particular with the question of advocating secession:

'The demand for a "yes" or "no" reply to the question of secession in the case of every nation may seem a very "practical" one. In reality it is absurd—it is metaphysical in theory, while in practice it leads to subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie's policy. The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle. Theoretically you cannot say in advance whether the bourgeois-democratic revolution will end in a given nation seceding from another nation, or in its equality with the latter; in either case, the important thing for the proletariat is to ensure the development of its class. For the bourgeoisie it is important to hamper this development by pushing the aims of its "own" nation before those of the proletariat. That is why the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the right to self-determination, without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give anything at the expense of another nation.' (*The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, pp. 53-54)

The National Question in Cyprus

While Cyprus is not part of Turkey, the sizeable Turkish population and the involvement of the Turkish state in the affairs of Cyprus make Cyprus a key question for Turkish revolutionaries. Up until 1974, the Turkish population of Cyprus was nationally oppressed by the Greek population—since the invasion by the Turkish army, the Greeks have been in the more oppressed position. Because the two populations have been thoroughly intermingled on this small island it is clear

that the reality of 'self-determination' for either people can only come at the expense of the other and thus 'self-determination' is not applicable. We call therefore for the withdrawal of all foreign troops (whether Turk, Greek, UN, NATO or any other) and for the unity of Greek and Turkish working peoples of Cyprus to overthrow capitalism and establish a workers' state under the leadership of a Trotskyist party. Only through a united workers' revolution can national oppression be ended in Cyprus in a fashion which is just for both peoples.

The Importance of the Workers' States

Because of Turkey's strategic location, the question of the attitude of revolutionaries to the workers' states is extremely important. The glaring omission of any mention of these questions in the leadership's document is an indication of their inability to understand the tasks facing Turkish revolutionaries. We stand for political revolution in the workers' states and for their unconditional defence against imperialist attack.

For Leninist Democratic Centralism

The internal organisational form of our Turkish group is far removed from democratic centralism. Rather it is cliquism in the form of a rigid centralism. In Britain Comrade H. the 'General Secretary' of the Turkish Group, and Comrade I. act as a disciplined unit with the Executive Committee against the other comrades. This ridiculously rigid centralism reached its highest point in Turkey. In Istanbul, there was an area committee of three and a membership of two who were not on the area committee. In Ankara, formerly there were two area committee members and one comrade who was not on the area committee. The political consequence of this mode of organisation is that the membership has no participation in the discussion of the group—and therefore has its political education stunted. Real discussion takes place only in the 'leading body'—the rest of the membership is simply presented with decisions which it must accept or launch a fight against the leadership.

The bureaucratic methods of the leadership cannot be separated from the way that members are recruited to our group in Turkey—not on the basis of agreement with the WSL's political line but simply on an agreement to participate in the group's activities and to accept the discipline of the group. We stand for the Leninist form of democratic centralism—the membership must be involved in discussing and forming the political line, and after a decision is democratically arrived at it must be carried out loyally by all comrades. Only in this way is it possible to correct the errors of the leadership and educate the members.

Leninist discipline is not just an agreement of vaguely sympathetic individuals to work together. James P. Cannon, the father of American Trotskyism, said the following:

'It isn't a question of 50 percent democracy and 50 percent centralism. Democracy must have the dominant role in normal times. In times of action, intense activity, crisis, ... and swings of the party such as we took toward proletarianization after the split, and so forth, centralism must have the upper hand, as it had in the last few years. Now the Leninist method and form of organization flows from the program, the tasks and the aim that is set for the

party, in complete harmony, a completely harmonious conception.' [emphasis ours] (*The Socialist Workers Party in World War II*, p. 352)

For a Democratic-Centralist International Tendency! For the Re-Creation of the Fourth International!

While the beginning of the Turkish leadership's document pays homage to the need to belong to a principled international movement, it is *against* being part of a democratic-centralist international tendency: '... we propose to establish "Enternasyonal" groups on a centralised basis in each area, as a preliminary step towards a Turkish Trotskyist party, autonomous of, though in political alliance with, the WSL.' (p.10) We oppose the setting up of more groups like the Greek CIL or American SL(DC) with which the WSL can 'ally' without taking any interest in or political responsibility for. This kind of 'internationalism' is the loose federated 'internationalism' of the centrist London Bureau of the 1930's or of the United Secretariat today—it has nothing to do with [the] Bolshevik internationalism of the Left Opposition. We stand for the organising of a Leninist democratic-centralist international tendency which will struggle for the re-creation of the Fourth International. Such an international tendency cannot be a series of politically allied but organisationally autonomous groups but must function as the embryo of the *world party* of socialist revolution—the Fourth International.

The establishment of a democratic-centralist international revolutionary tendency is not simply an organisation question—it is primarily a political one. The revolutionary international, and all of its sections, must steadfastly uphold the basic programmatic positions of the Transitional Programme: opposition to all forms of class collaborationism; recognition of the validity of the strategy of Permanent Revolution; and a determination to lead a political revolution against the ruling Stalinist bureaucrats in the deformed and degenerated workers' states combined with a policy of unconditional military defence of these states against imperialism. Before the WSL can undertake any principled revolutionary work in Turkey (or anywhere else) there must be a complete programmatic re-alignment of the movement in accordance with the positions presented in this document and the document 'In Defence of the Revolutionary Programme' for which we hereby declare our support.

FORWARD TO A TURKISH TROTSKYIST PARTY, SECTION OF A RE-CREATED FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, WORLD PARTY OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

E. (Turkish Group; Hackney Branch)
F. (Turkish Group; Hackney Branch)

28 January 1978

[We acknowledge help in preparing this document from Comrade Jim Saunders.]

NEXT ISSUE:

Reply to John Lister's polemic against the Trotskyist Faction in *Socialist Press*, 'In Defence of a Revolutionary Orientation.'

SPARTACIST BRITAIN

No capitulation to nationalism!

For a proletarian perspective in Ireland!

'The International will not judge the British comrades by the articles that they write in the *Call* and the *Workers Dreadnought*, but by the number of comrades who are thrown into gaol for agitating in the colonial countries. We would point out to the British comrades that it is their duty to help the Irish movement with all their strength, that it is their duty to agitate among the British troops, that it is their duty to use all their resources to block the policy that the British transport and railway unions are at present pursuing of permitting troop transports to be shipped to Ireland. It is very easy at the moment to speak out in Britain against intervention in Russia, since even the bourgeois left is against it. It is harder for the British comrades to take up the cause of Irish independence and of anti-militarist activity. We have a right to demand this difficult work of the British comrades.' (Karl Radek in *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, Vol I, New Park, pp. 127-128)

The question of the correct policy to take towards Ireland is a crucial test of the revolutionary fibre of any of the nominally Marxist tendencies on the British left. Clearly the correct and necessary demand for the

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unconditional removal of British troops from the North is wholly insufficient to deal with the complex national questions which must be addressed.

Nations emerge through social conflict, and their composition, geographical boundaries and cultural makeup are determined by the results of that conflict. The national problems which presently exist in Ireland are the products of previous social conflicts, just as the destiny of the Protestant population of the northeast will be determined by future conflicts the results of which are as yet by no means pre-determined.

The rising of 1798 led by the Protestant Wolfe Tone offered the possibility of a unitary bourgeois Ireland undivided by sectarian strife, with an essentially undifferentiated working class and an indigenous bourgeoisie. The defeat of this uprising represented the failure of the nascent bourgeoisie to wrest independence from England and to assert supremacy over the Irish landlords—themselves an extension of the English aristocracy. This defeat removed for more than a century the possibility of the crystallisation of a single nation from the peoples of Ireland and blocked the achievement of any but the most minimal of bourgeois-democratic gains. The crushing of the Wolfe Tone uprising laid the basis for the development of Loyalism among the Protestants. Contrary to the Green nationalist mythology which is widely accepted by the self-proclaimed 'Marxist left' in Britain, Loyalism did not originate as an imperialist plot but is rather a phenomenon rooted in the material development of capitalism in Ireland which essentially *pre-dates* the development of Irish Catholic nationalism.

In the 1870's the more far-sighted Liberal defenders of British imperial interests under Gladstone attempted to institute Home Rule for Ireland, an early experiment in 'neo-colonialism', as an alternative to direct military control. This attempt ran up against the intense opposition of the entrenched Protestant interests. While Orange mobs led by reactionary landlords had been the traditional means of disciplining the Catholics, the social

weight of the landlords could not have resisted the plans of British imperialism if the Belfast bourgeoisie had not intervened and assumed command of the opposition to Home Rule. Not seventeenth century settlements but very modern considerations inspired the Belfast industrialists who feared that the consequences of Home Rule would be the milking of their industry to sustain a corrupt and indolent state bureaucracy in Dublin under the stultifying influence of the Catholic Church and its counterpart to the Orange Order, the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

The Belfast industrialists took control of the Orange movement and the opposition to Home Rule with the Ulster Convention of 1892 (for which the Organising Committee had prudently ensured an urban preponderance among the delegates). At the Convention the Belfast bourgeoisie succeeded in taking the mass base from the landowner-aristocrats and placing it under the banner of something akin to an Ulster nationalism. To dampen any suggestion of frivolity, women were excluded altogether from the proceedings of the Convention and the floor of the pavilion was sanded in



IRA checkpoint in the Bogside in Derry, 1972

order to make the movement of the delegates absolutely silent. The point was to project an image of the Ulsterman as sober, industrious and tradition-bound, in every way a different species from the feckless irresponsible rebel that was supposed to populate the rest of Ireland.

The partition of 1920 which produced the Northern Irish statelet was not simply the result of a conspiracy of plutocratic landlords in London supported by backwoods Tory politicians—rather it was essentially a compromise worked out between British imperialism (which had no direct economic interest in dividing Ireland) and the Belfast bourgeoisie. Partition had long been a possibility, based on the difference between the industrial development around the Lagan Valley and the rest of Ireland which remained basically agricultural.

In fighting for the unity of the working class James Connolly had vigorously opposed the dismemberment of Ireland, correctly recognising that the nationalist passions unleashed on both sides could lead only to a 'carnival of reaction'. But, in the absence of a revolutionary party capable of undermining the communal polarisation and leading the struggle along class lines, the bourgeoisie succeeded in severely exacerbating the divisions and so in 1920 the possibility of a single Irish nation was again removed from the agenda. The division in Ireland was achieved at a cost which fully vindicated Connolly's opposition: thousands of anti-unionist workers were driven from their jobs in Belfast and there were bloody pogroms and forced rural population transfers. It is necessary to recognise that the situation which confronts revolutionaries almost sixty years after the formation of the Six County state is very different from the one Connolly faced. Thus, while it was absolutely correct to oppose partition in order to unite Catholic and Protestant workers *before* the division, the achievement of working class unity today requires us to **OPPOSE THE FORCIBLE RE-UNIFICATION OF THE SIX COUNTIES WITH THE CLERICALIST BOURGEOIS STATE IN THE SOUTH.**

The partition resulted in a deformed expression of self-determination for the south and the west of the island with a section of the Catholic nation trapped inside a 'white settler state' in the northeast. But unlike Algeria or Rhodesia the 'white settlers' (Protestants planted centuries before from England and Scotland) were not only the administrators of the colony and the holders of most of the skilled and prestigious jobs but were also the majority of proletarians and small farmers (and in some areas also farm labourers), as well as a sizeable component of the reservoir of unemployed.

The Leninist Position on the National Question

Bolsheviks are the most consistent fighters for democracy and champions of the oppressed. For this reason the democratic right of nations to self-determination is an integral part of our programme. What does this demand mean? For Lenin it meant that:

As democrats, we are irreconcilably hostile to any, however slight, oppression of any nationality and to any privileges for any nationality. As democrats, we demand the right of nations to self-determination in the *political sense* of that term (see the Programme of the RSDLP), i.e., the right to secede. We demand unconditional *equality* for all nations in the state and the unconditional protection of the rights of

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