

WORKERS FIGHT

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 33

Final Revised Conference Agenda

Amendments and Additional Resolutions received before 16th August

Background documents:

'Nineteen Theses on the Fourth International' - document
of WF NC discussion of Dec. '72- Jan '73.

'The Eclipse of Reason' - the IMG 1972-75.

PLEASE BRING THIS BULLETIN TO CONFERENCE WITH YOU.
ALSO BRING IB's 31 and 32.

CONFERENCE AGENDA - as amended by CAC, 16-8-75.

			<u>INTRODUCED</u>	<u>CHAIR</u>
Saturday	11.30-11.45	Apologies for Absence; ratification of observers; Standing Orders; Agenda.		B.Hardy
	11.45 - 1	<u>1. ECONOMIC & POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES</u>		Minutes- J.Riley J.Cunningham
		Economic Perspectives	(IB31) S. Corbishley	
		Political Perspectives, & resolution on Healey Plan	(IB31) Neal Smith	
		Amendment(on unemployment)1	(IB32) * Neal Smith	
		Amendment(on Healey Plan)2	* Pete Firmin	
		Amendment(on public spending)3	* Simon Temple	
		Amendment(on arms spending)4	* Martin Thomas	
		Amendment(on unemployment)5	* C. Whytehead	
		Amendment(on Labour Party)6	*	
		Amendment(on colonisation)6A	*	
	2 - 3	Discussion on economic and political perspectives, contd.		<u>CHAIR</u> J.Sutton
	3 - 4	<u>2. LABOUR PARTY</u>		Minutes- I.Wels, S.Arnall
		Resolution on LP work	(IB32) Naomi Wimborne	
		Supplementary resolution	(IB32) Sean Matgamma	
	4.30 -5	Discussion on LP, continued		<u>CHAIR</u> L.Duffy
	5 - 6.30	<u>3. FRACTION MEETINGS</u>		
		Engineering fraction: convenor	Pete Smith	
		NUT Fraction	Ian Hollingworth	
		NHS Fraction	Jack Sutton	
		White collar fraction	Stephen Corbishley	
		Student fraction	Mick O'Sullivan	
	7 - 9	National Committee meeting (on the F.I.)		
	8pm onwards	Social at the 'Mother Redcap', near Camden Town underground station.		
Sunday	11 - 11.15	Appeal against expulsion from WF by J.Strauther		<u>CHAIR</u> N.Smith
	11.15 - 12.30	<u>4. INDUSTRIAL & RANK-&-FILE WORK</u>		Minutes- N.Wimborne L.Duffy
		Resolution on R&F Committees and Movements	(IB32) Sean Matgamma	
		Resolution (on unemployment)7	* Chris Whytehead	
	12.30 - 1	<u>5. ORGANISATION</u>		
		Organisation Report	(IB31) Martin Thomas	
		Accounts	Rachel Lever	
		Report on the paper	Andrew Hornung	
		Amendment(on priorities)	(IB32) Dave Spencer	
		Resolution(on subs.)8	* Ivan Wels	
		Resolution(on magazine)9	* Simon Temple	
	1.40 - 2.40	Discussion on organisation contd.		<u>CHAIR</u> A.Hornung
	2.40 - 3	<u>6. NOMINATIONS AND VOTING FOR NATIONAL COMMITTEE</u>		
	3 - 4	<u>7. IRELAND</u>		Minutes- S.Leigh P.Longman
		Resolution on Irish work	(IB32) Susan Carlyle	
		Resolution(relief groups)10	* Neal Smith	
	4.30-5.30	<u>8. MARXISM & WOMENS LIBERATION</u>		<u>CHAIR</u> P.Smith
		'Marxism & Womens Liberation'	(IB31) Fran Brodie	
	5.30-6.30	<u>9. REGROUPMENT & THE REV. LEFT</u>		Minutes- J.Riley D.Spencer
		'Regroupment & the rev. left' with amendments to come from Sean Matgamma	(IB31) Andrew Hornung	
	7.30 - 9	<u>10. PORTUGAL</u>		<u>CHAIR</u> N.Wimborne Minutes- SCY,ME
		Open 'Forum' session on the situation in Portugal	Bas Hardy	

Monday	11 - 11.45	<u>11. CONSTITUTION</u> Re-Draft constitution (NB: this re-draft supersedes the one in IB31)	(IB32) Simon Temple	<u>CHAIR</u> B.Sugden
		Amendment (IB)11	* C.Whytehead	Minutes-- D.Robinson
		Amendment (voting for NC)12	* M.Thomas	C.Taylor
11.45 - 1.15		<u>12. THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL</u> 'The world party of socialist revolution....'	(IB32) Sean Matganna	<u>CHAIR</u> S.Arnall
		Amendment (dialogue)13	* Pete Firmin	Minutes--
		Amendment (various points)14	* Neal Smith	SCy,MT
2.15 - 2.30		Election of Standing Orders Cttee & Control Commission (if appropriate sections of draft Constitution are accepted)		<u>CHAIR</u> D.Spencer
2.30 - 4.30		Discussion on Fourth International Procedural resolution:15	* Simon Temple	Minutes-- B.Hardy A.Hornung

NOTES from Conference Arrangements Committee

1. Amendments & additional resolutions received before 16th August are included in the above agenda. They are marked with a * to indicate they are included in this bulletin, and a number to help identify them.

2. The Conference Arrangements Committee wishes to propose that members should have 15 votes (not 12) for NC elections, this year and in future. The reason is simple enough: there are 15 places on the NC, not 12.

3. Two words are missed out in the Standing Orders in IB32. The proposed allocation for speeches from the floor, for summing-ups, and for amendments other than to NC reports, is five minutes.

4. Despite two circulars requesting payment in advance of the conference charges, and despite the fact the group has to pay the hire charges and the cost of food in advance, some comrades have not yet sent in their £2s. The Conference Arrangements Committee proposes to conference that comrades paying at the door be sur-charged 50p.

5. Some of the allocations of comrades to chair sessions or take minutes have been changed round as a result of the changes in the agenda. Could comrades please take this circular as an amended request? Also, could all comrades chairing sessions see the CAC before the beginning of their session?

6. The times allotted for breaks are rather longer than they need be, since food will be available 'on site'. We hope this will give us some 'leeway' so that if a particular session runs a bit over time, that can be made up by shortening a break rather than by disrupting the rest of the agenda.

AMENDMENTS & RESOLUTIONS RECEIVED BY 16th AUGUST

ON ECONOMIC & POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

1. In section 7 delete all from "We must launch a WF national campaign..." and replace by:
"We must make the fight against unemployment the central campaign of the group in the coming period, taking up the ideas outlined in section 8 of this document. In order to do this properly we need to organise special educationals on unemployment and the fight against it, drawing particularly on past experiences such as the National Unemployed Workers Movement. A special pamphlet on the subject should be commissioned for immediate production.

"In the localities we should focus our work round the LP and LPYS, particularly given the LPYS campaign on unemployment. We should support the campaign, but try to take it further by getting YSs to organise among the unemployed and by establishing Unemployed Workers' Committees. These should be open to both unemployed and employed workers, and we should fight for their affiliation to local Trades Councils. Although we ourselves are not large enough to set up such committees off our own bat, we should be able to get them set up with the support of a local YS/LP or trade union."

NEAL SMITH

2. In resolution on Healey Plan, renumber section 2 as 2(i) and add:

2(ii) Although the number of Labour MPs voting against the Healey Plan was higher than we expected, this was largely token and certainly showed up the weakness of the Tribune group of MPs. With few exceptions these MPs will not take the fight to constituency level, and we should see it as our task to force them into doing so. The fight against the Right in the Labour Party is far more likely to come from below rather than above.

Add at the end of section 4:

In such a situation we should make it clear that we support the defence of workers' living standards even if this means bringing down the Labour Government.

SOUTHERN REGION (to be proposed by Pete Firmin)

3. Delete the sentence in section 9 which begins: "We should argue for the restoration of the cuts...", and all other references to the sliding scale of public expenditure. In place of the deleted sentence, insert:

"We fight against all cuts in social services, local council spending, health and education, and for the restoration of all cuts that have been made. We support the protection of the funds of these services from inflation, and recognise that, in a period of high unemployment, the level of social expenditure (in real terms) needs to rise. However, our main stress should be on what is provided (sliding scale of State benefits, maintenance of unemployed at TU rates, no redundancies in public services (except the repressive bodies of the state - police, army, etc.)), not on how to pay for it. We reject the demand of a sliding scale of public expenditure, which is firstly too defensive, and secondly logically includes a sliding scale of expenditure on the repressive organs of the state (army, police etc.)"

SOUTHERN REGION (to be proposed by Simon Temple)

4. Add to the end of amendment 3: "On arms spending, our policy is for ending the standing army and replacing it by a militia system, based on universal military training in the home town and under the control of working-class organisations. We reject the reformist policy of Tribune and the Stalinists (for the maintenance of the bourgeois standing army, but on a more frugal level). While adhering to the old principle of "Not a man, not a penny for this system", we also reject the utopian policy advocated by the IMG (demanding the capitalist government abolish all 'defence' spending)."

MARTIN THOMAS

5. In section 7, insert after first sentence:

"We recognise unemployment as the major question facing the working class at present. Failure to actively combat it will mean demoralisation and defeat on other issues. The fight against unemployment is the factor determining the success of the fight against the Healey Plan".

Add at the end of section 7:

"Such committees should not be just sub-committees of the Trades Councils, but real organisations of the unemployed. We should support Claimants Unions and work to turn them into mass organisations of the unemployed and for their affiliation to local Trades Councils"

In section 8, add

"(f) In industries or companies declaring redundancies we fight for the ending of all overtime working in other sections."

In section 8(c), add at the end: "- no hidden redundancies, fill all vacant places. No 'natural' wastage".

In section 8(e), delete the clause "in all their financial and state connections".

CHRIS WHYTEHEAD

6. In section 13, last paragraph, delete all after first sentence and insert:

"We recognise the danger of substituting ourselves for such a rank and file movement in the Labour Party. A key issue is the fight for democracy in the labour movement, against all bans and bureaucratic limitation of discussion. We should not work to build such a movement ourselves, but rather to build our fraction".

CHRIS WHYTEHEAD

6A. Add at end of section 14.

"The NC should use the powers it has and implement the policy adopted on colonisation at the last Aggregate, to concentrate members in selected areas of industry to work consciously to build up a WF fraction either nationally or locally. Without this step, moves to strengthen the Industrial sub-committee and industrial fractions will fail as they have in the past".

CHRIS WHYTEHEAD

ON INDUSTRIAL WORK

7. We instruct the NC to produce a pamphlet on the fight against unemployment and organise an educational discussion in WF on this issue.

CHRIS WHYTEHEAD

ON ORGANISATION

8. Subs shall be paid as 3% of all income, i.e. 3p in the £. The minimum sub shall be 20p per week.

i) Married couples and couples living together will be assessed as 3% of half the household income for each individual whether or not both are members of WF.

ii) Housewives who unavoidably have only an allocated amount of housekeeping per week (i.e. when the husband is not in WF) shall pay the minimum sub.

iii) Children will have an allowance of 1/2% for each non-earning child.

iv) Students will pay 3% of their cheque money at the beginning of term and 3% of any money coming in after that.

v) Cds. on strike, short-time working etc. shall ask for dispensation from the Steering Committee.

IVAN WELS

9. Conference recognises that we have not at present the resources to produce 'Permanent Revolution' monthly, without disastrous effects on our other work. We resolve to produce the magazine quarterly, and to give the necessary priority to ensure that it appears with strict regularity.

SIMON TEMPLE

ON IRELAND

10. During the Ulster Workers Council strike, WF put out the call for the immediate setting-up of a national network of groups to provide relief to the Catholic community of the North. We initiated a large public meeting on solidarity in London, and began to set up relief groups ourselves in a few localities where it was possible. In the event, the quick success of the UWC strike cut away the possibilities of any real development of such committees at that time. Nevertheless, the attempt was perfectly correct given the situation.

Since then we have recognised that the situation in the North is one which is moving in the direction of a full-scale civil war (there are other possibilities, but we should be prepared for the worst rather than indulging in bland optimism and passivity on the issue), and that therefore relief committees will have an important role in the future. However, at the present time few people are going to be attracted to relief work, and the chances of there arising meaningful relief groups, rather than groups of the 'left', are limited. Nevertheless, we should not refuse to participate in any relief groups that arise and which do involve a number of people other than ourselves.

Our policy, then, should be as follows:

a) We make general propaganda for relief groups within the context of our analysis of the rapidly deteriorating situation in the North.

b) We recognise that few meaningful relief groups will arise at the moment and thus still concentrate our efforts in TOM.

c) In the event of a civil war, TOM will certainly split into pro- and anti-Republican factions, and we should see our work in TOM as being directed at hardening out a group around our positions. Given this, the continuation of the Solidarity Bulletin is vital.

d) Where meaningful relief groups arise we participate in them, attempting to link these to the local TOM group.

NEAL SMITH

ON THE CONSTITUTION

11. In section 5(iv), at the end of the sentence add: "of the NC".

In section 11, add a new sub-section (iv) and re-number accordingly:

"Every member shall receive a copy of the IB"

CHRIS WHYTEHEAD

12. In section 5(ii), for "12 votes", read "15 votes": CONFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Note: There is also a typing error in the text of the Constitution re-draft in IB32.

Section 6(iv) has been omitted, and should read:

"The appointment, pay, terms of reference, and dismissal of full-timers shall be decided by the SC, subject to ratification by or (if factional victimisation is alleged) appeal to the NC."

ERRATA ON "THE ECONOMIC CRISIS"

The following are the errata to my article on "The Economic Crisis" in IB 25. These are due almost solely to my undecipherable handwriting, not to any shortcomings on the part of the comrade who typed my scrawl !

- (a) There are two p.4s. Accordingly, renumber the second 5, "5" 6 etc. The errata now refer to the renumbered pages.
- (b) p.1, 3rd para., 2nd. line. "spent" should read "post".
- (c) p.2, last para., 4th line - "many" should read "money."
- (d) p.3, beneath the table - should read "1965- 1967"
next para., 2nd line. "the" cuts" should read "tax cuts".
- (e) p.5, 3rd para., 5th line. should read "1965-1970".
last para. between "fluctuations" and "Account" should be inserted the phrase "eg. allowing for the effects of strikes on profitability!"
footnote line 5. "of businessmen" should read "to....".
- (f) p.6, line 5. "Figures 1,2,3," included on a separate sheet.
line 9. 3rd word = "output", 5th word = "hence", not "have".
last para. beginning 5th line insert "primary"; "could" should read "(underdeveloped countries)".
- (g) 2nd line of writing. "Table 5" should read "Table 1" 9 (p7).
last para., 1st line, insert "fastest" between "the" and "rate".
- (h) p8, Table 5, 3rd column should read "1964-1968".
1st. line. "1972" should read "1973".
line 4. "1973" should read "1974".
- (i) p9, 4th line. insert "from" at the end.
2nd para., line 3, between "Thus" and "are" insert "they".
last para., line 2. "economists" should read "economies".
The table at the bottom of the page is Table 7.
- (j) p10, penultimate para. "1½ million" should read "1½ million".
- (k) p12, penultimate para., 2nd. line, at end insert "vehicles!".
3rd line, after "Romeo" insert ", 20,000.2".
5th line. "limited" should read "linked".

PHIL SEMP

14/8/75

AMENDMENTS, CONTINUED:

ON THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

13. The communist international will only be built by a process of splits and fusions on the international level. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to seek dialogue with other tendencies as the framework for our contribution to the political and ideological clarification necessary for the building of the communist international.

SOUTHERN REGION (to be prop. by P. Firmin)

14. (i) In section 4, delete "If the USFI is the Fourth International... beside the point"; replace with "The USFI is immensely strong now compared with Trotsky's Fourth International - but that is beside the point".

(ii) In section 4, 8th para, after "No Fourth International exists", add "in the tradition of Trotsky".

(iii) In section 4, 10th para, for "that the Fourth International exists", read "that a Trotskyist international exists".

(iv) In section 6, 2nd para, lines 2/3: delete "That no Fourth International exists".

(v) In conclusion, after "there is no Fourth International", add "in the tradition of Trotsky".

NEAL SMITH

15. In view of the importance of the FI question, and the grossly inadequate time for discussion, conference feels unable to take a decision on the question. We instruct the NC to organise thorough education and discussion in the group and in 'Permanent Revolution'. The question should be decided at a special NC in four months, unless serious differences emerge, in which case a special aggregate shall decide.

SIMON TEMPLE

This document represents the end product of the WF NC discussions on the Fourth International in December 1972 and January 1973. It has never previously been typed up with all the amendments incorporated.

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I: INTERNATIONALISM.

No Trotskyism without internationalism. Also not without revolutionary party, in the meaningful sense. Otherwise only a programme, which demands an international party. The problem is to create an International.

II: THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL & THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

FI: peculiar origins within CI. Early CI = highest peak of Marxism as "science of revolutionary practice" ever reached, before or since. Massive development and accumulation of advanced ideas and analyses and of a world wide revolutionary army, with the Soviet Union as its territorial bastion. Rise of bureaucracy, seizure of control, led to dramatic reversal for forces of revolution. Ideas valid, alive, adequate to relating to world and revolutionary tasks: revolutionary army under control of bureaucracy and bureaucracy's agents and increasing bowdlerisation of communist ideas and programme.

Trotskyism arose first and foremost as a defence of the programme. Its forces were minimal. Its ideological contribution - criticism of Socialism in One Country - Anglo-Russian Committee - China - Third Period. All defensive of fundamentals of programme of CI, despite tiny revolutionary minority being counterposed to the revolutionary army, revolutionary in intentions, assembled under the banner of the October Revolution. The major ideological development of Trotskyism and the FI movement = the analysis of Stalinism.

Throughout the '30s, tragic dichotomy between the programme and the theoretical conquests of Bolshevism, held to by infinitesimal forces, and the massed armies of the revolution, now the dupes of Stalinism. Trotskyism was marked by having inherited its fundamental programme and ideas "ready made", valid and applicable to the world it operated in, its function in the 1920s and 30s to defend and apply these ideas. That was both its strength and the roots of the crisis of the 1940s and beyond.

III: THE VANISHED LEGIONS OF BOLSHEVISM

Deutscher's image of Trotsky as the sole survivor of Atlantis - the vanished legions of Bolshevism, annihilated by Stalinism in the late '30s - will do for the whole Trotskyist movement. The possessor of a revolutionary programme and analysis of the world, and of revolutionary perspectives of a titanic scope, it was itself organisationally puny.

But its conception of a revolutionary perspective was never a Menshevik-platonic one of speculation; it was a Bolshevik conception of a guide to deeds, action by revolutionary forces. It spent the '20s and '30s watching helplessly the mass struggles, and the successive defeats of the revolutionary working class, seeing what was happening with all the clarity of the continuators of Lenin's CI, yet isolated and powerless to affect developments.

The conflict between revolutionary perspectives and feeble forces,

between the 'objective processes' and the subjective activity of both the Trotskyist forces and the revolutionary working class, has dogged Trotskyism consistently - reading it repeatedly; generating one-sided ideological developments away from it; generating speculative vulgar evolutionism and spontancist conceptions on the one side, acceptance of other social forces than the proletariat as the entrepreneurs of the revolution on the other.

Already at the end of the 1920s the contrast between its size and the scope of its ambitions and aspirations, between what it wanted and believed needed doing and what it itself was able to do, rent the then Russian-based Trotskyist movement into three segments: Those who saw only what the industrialisation turn in Russia was doing, and ignored how it was done and by whom it was done - Prochrazhensky, Piatakov, and the administrators; Those who placed themselves entirely on the semi-syndicalist grounds of the effect on the working class, that is concerning themselves exclusively with how and by whom the new industrialisation turn was carried out, and what the effect on the lives and rights of the Russian people was - neglecting and dismissing what was done, and its relationship to the Trotskyist programme - the State Capitalists; And those, like Trotsky, who resisted the decompositions, the mutually repellent one-sidedness, ignoring neither 'what' nor 'whom'. The pattern was a recurring one.

IV: TROTSKYISM AS AN IDEOLOGICAL CURRENT

Trotskyism never represented anything substantial (Ceylon, Vietnam, and Bolivia excluded) except as the custodian and defender of the ideas of the early CI, which it developed, especially regarding Stalinism, a new phenomenon, and, partly, Fascism. It was always an ideological current par excellence; and can only be judged as such, not by such standards as the FI itself applied to the CI. That is not a negligible thing; without the heroic rear-guard action of Trotskyism the effects of Stalinism would have been truly and totally annihilating for communism. But we are concerned here with a 'cold' assessment of the reality of the FI, in all its aspects.

V: WHY WE DISCUSSES THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The assessment of the FI must be an assessment of an ideological current, primarily. Nor can such an assessment be obscured by the undoubted fact that it is an International ideological current. We need an International; but that cannot lead to indifference to the political content of such an International, especially an ideological, propagandist International, any more than the existence of a 'Party' and the consciousness of the need for one, can lead to indifference to its programme, practice, record.

The FI must be the starting point: the high point of post-Lenin communism; undoubtedly the custodian of the ideas of communism; undoubtedly the regroupment of the revolutionary vanguard. What happened to it is crucial for an understanding of communism; the process of understanding is an inescapable part of starting again, even if we conclude it to have been a failure.

VI: TROTSKYISM TO 1938

Pre-1938 history briefly outlined: a) Russian origin and confinement; b) 1930 = first international conference; c) 1930-33 opposition in CI; d) 1933 = call for FI; e) 1933-36 conceive of movement towards FI as a process ending in a big regrouped FI; f) Trotsky in 1936 calls on International conference to declare

itself, meagre propaganda forces, the FI. Conference disagrees.
g) 1938 one-day conference declares FI. Perspective of mass upsurge in/after war, of Stalinist instability.

VII: THE FOUNDING OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

1938 ideas adequate to experience, therefore a general guide to action, lacking in forces. Only substantial forces were in USA and Belgium. Trotsky's writings admit that FI's theoretical basis no more than re-assertion and need to develop certain analyses - e.g. re imperialism. 'Transitional Programme' fundamentally derived from theoretical advances of early CI. (Therefore fetishisation of the Transitional Programme is simply stupid).

VIII: WAR

Organisational disruption: European atomisation; International Secretariat in USA. Ideological collapse before social patriotism in France. Perspectives for Russia underestimate the stabilising effect of Nazi treatment of occupied areas. Perspectives for revolutionary upsurge in Europe totally vindicated.

But the contradiction between objective possibilities, including the subjective drive of the working class masses and the expectation of revolution, and the labour bureaucracies, especially Stalinist, remained unresolved. Isolated, persecuted, assassinated, impotent - Trotskyists saw CPs reconsolidate capitalism; and the 'Red' Army snuff out the revolutionary upsurge in Eastern Europe post-war.

The 'perspectives' were fundamentally right, seen as Marxist perspectives - the forces to realise them were inadequate, were defeated. E. Europe was stalinised; capitalism was consolidated and stabilised; in Yugoslavia and China, then in Vietnam, Stalinist formations, cut off from the proletariat, overthrew capitalism.

IX: THE CRISIS OF TROTSKYISM

The crisis of Trotskyism began essentially in 1943/44 - as a result of its inability to realise its revolutionary perspectives and the subsequent evolution on the basis of a) proletarian defeat in Eastern and Western Europe; b) the independent revolutionary processes, giving rise to social/political mutations, eventually called deformed workers' states by the FI.

X: THE THIRD WORLD CONGRESS

At the 1951 World Congress, Trotskyism reconstituted itself on the basis of analysis of massive changes in the world, analysis made by its own tiny and inexperienced forces, minus Trotsky.

Its problem was to reconcile the revolutionary perspectives with the continuing bureaucratic control; its concept of Stalinism with its expansion; its programme of socialism with the bureaucratic forms of the existing states in which capitalism had been overthrown. Its fundamental task, as a primarily ideological current, was to integrate the new experiences with its previous theory - fully, so as to recreate a theory that would be as sure a guide to action as that of Bolshevism up to world war II, when the weakness of the forces holding those positions allowed unexpected developments. In addition, the struggle of the FI to actually build revolutionary parties, and to elaborate tactics appropriate to the goal in the given situation created parallel problems, which intermingled with and cut across, and in fact bedevilled the process of ideological self-reconstruction.

The FI must be judged by its success in achieving this funda-

mental task, of ideological clarification, which is an essential precondition for building revolutionary parties.

XI: TWO TRENDS

Leaving aside the various 'new class' groups (state capitalists, bureaucratic collectivists, etc.) two fundamental tendencies emerged within Trotskyism, expressing in their own way the problem of ideological rearmament of Trotskyism; the now USFI and the International Committee (SLL/OCI). In addition a number of ideological/organisational satellites of both tendencies existed.

One (IC) represented the retreat from the real problems of Trotskyism as applied to developments in the real world, into dogmatism, based on the previous strength of the movement. The other (USFI) represented the attempt to come to terms with the real world, but has been characterised, in contrast to the dogmatists, by an over-receptive, over-impressionable, over-accommodating relationship to various political currents.

The dogmatists undercut the scientific basis of Marxism, by choking it off from the revivifying experience of all events after 1938; the USFI in the 20-year history since 1953 has consistently repeated the fundamental ideas of communism, and the elementary aspirations of Trotskyism, but as an often compartmentalised ideological baggage, not always related, or related clearly enough, to the practical orientation, expectations, commentaries on events.

The dogmatists run away from the problem; the USFI receptiveness to the problems of the movement has led, given their theoretical inadequacy, to a destructuring, decomposing of its politics into a number of not at all clearly related elements, and thus to a history of political chameleonism (over-adaptation), political instability: often its 'analyses' have been confined to general panoramic descriptions and its scientific 'prognoses' to hopes of events outside their control, simply duplicating others that have happened (cf. Algeria/ Cuba).

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

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

XII: THE PROBLEMS OF THE USFI

The dichotomy between the concept of world revolution and the fact of the genuine revolutionary forces being tiny has generated a whole current of vulgar evolutionist speculation. This has led to results ranging from passive (necessarily) expectations of the revolution happening 'inexorably' (Algeria, Vietnam now), tendencies towards evolutionary-type deep entry (the image of getting the right train),

The attempt to assimilate the experience of China, Yugoslavia, Cuba etc. into their theory as a guide to action has led to an extreme credulousness in the face of opposition/revolutionary currents of various sorts. This is not a subjective fault necessarily (better this than the arrogant Europe-centred dogmatists). It results from attempting to re-accomplish the tasks of bringing together all the

threads of the complicated processes in the world into a unified conception, as did the early Comintern, but without that organisation's vast range of contact with the details of world reality, or its resources, theoretical, practical, intellectual.

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

The USFI has made correct, though incomplete, explanations of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions in terms of the overall objective 'Third World' relationship to imperialism; of the class structure of those countries; and of the survival of the post-capitalist state in Russia. It has repeatedly ignored the incompleteness of the revolution in these countries. It has glorified bureaucratic formations such as those of Mao and Tito. At times it has explicitly denied the need for a supplementary political revolution in these states, which have never known workers' democracy and suffer all the contradictions of Stalinist misrule. The programmatic document of the 1963 reunification even talks of the Yugoslav, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions confirming the theory of Permanent Revolution "to the hilt"! If so, while no workers' democracy exists (not even in Cuba) and no direct workers' rule - then the theory of Permanent Revolution has been foreshortened by a head. So, indeed, has the theory of Proletarian Revolution.

In various ways, and for various periods, massive credit, amounting almost to a self-cancelling-out by the FI, has been extended to ruling Stalinist bureaucracies such as Tito's and Mao's. For whole periods the forces of the USFI have mimicked and even attempted to disguise themselves as left social-democrats, advocating fundamentally reformist ideas (in Britain the Healy group and the Week; in Belgium Mandel).

There have certainly been tendencies (sometimes leading to breaks from the movement) towards liquidating the programme of Trotskyism - especially on the question of the political revolution in China and Yugoslavia, and even in Cuba, though that is a special case*. But never a definitive break with the programme, never adopting the standpoint of the bureaucracy; rather the result of the ideological disarray and theoretical de-structuring produced by the attempt to assimilate reality to the theory of Trotskyism.

XIII: THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE.

A peculiarity of the IC, particularly the post-1963 IC, is that

* Castroism was a genuine revolutionary movement right up to 1968 (at least). There is a bonapartist formation in Cuba, with a functioning bureaucracy. But this is much less than is the case for the USSR. The masses have been armed and mobilised. There is populist-type democracy but no genuinely accountable workers' democracy. It is not foreseeable what will be the degree of the bureaucracy's resistance to workers' power. Therefore (a) a political revolution is necessary; (b) it is not clear whether it will be a massive anti-bureaucratic workers' movement or more like the 'police actions' which Trotsky spoke of in relation to the early Stalinist regime.

its forces opted for dogmatism after they had accepted as part of their dogma the major codifications produced by the attempt to come to terms with post-war reality, particularly those of the 1951 Congress. They retreated to dogma, cutting them off from a scientific assessment of reality and as a result their theory has no possibility of being a guide to the action they must take in the real world. Thus the most 'theoretical' (i.e. dogmatic) of them, the SLL, is utterly empirical in practice, having no living theory to steer by.

Having baulked only at declaring Cuba a workers' state, their view of the world is entirely schizophrenic. Calling China a workers' state, because they were in the FI in the early '50s, they still operate with a West European concept of class struggle as being of the most advanced proletarian kind or nothing; they are thus in the position of saying that a workers' state came into existence without the existence of anything resembling anything they would recognise as a class struggle occurring!

In their purest form these 'old Trotskyists' (the OCI, POR-Lora, RSL - not IC, but that's an accident) are (a) evolutionists; (b) workerists in the crudest sense. Fundamentally they are spontaneist. In fact, continual proclamations that "that's not the question, the question is to build the Fourth International" are, at root, paradoxically, spontaneist. Because, by brushing aside the concrete political questions, they reduce the party to a non-political fetish, a magic ingredient to add to the proto-revolutionary masses. They 'resolve' the problems of Trotskyism (Bolshevism deprived of the mass forces necessary to make its perspectives conscious elements in reality) by retreating to an exceptionally poverty-stricken neo-Kautskyism. They are organically right-wing through adaptation to the "workers' bureaucracies", particularly the social-democratic.

The SLL is fundamentally of this sort, only with a certain 'additive' which stresses, abstractly and meaninglessly, the role of consciousness in history: this has only added a verbal 'left' incoherence to the organically right-wing politics of the SLL.

XIV: THE MYTH OF 'PABLOISM'

All the Trotskyist forces since the war have encountered certain problems and committed grievous mistakes: of over-accommodation to the existing labour organisations or even bureaucracies; political chameleonism; vulgar evolutionism; muddle and confusion regarding, or even abandoning part of, the fundamental programme of Trotskyism for the Stalinist states. All or some of these have been denounced by the IC forces as 'Pabloism' (what is denounced as Pabloism, what is meant by the term, shifts and changes enormously).

In actuality the term 'Pabloism' has and can have no precise meaning because there is hardly a single mistake, however grievous, that the IC forces, themselves, collectively or separately, have not committed, usually with that crassness which is peculiar to them. 'Pabloism' is primarily a myth generated by the self-righteous dogmatists. It actually obscures and prevents discussion of the real problems of the movement taken as a whole and understood rationally in relation to the problems encountered by Trotskyism, by attributing to only one section of the movement the 'sins' common to all the movement, and arising from the post-war crisis. The phenomenon of the anti-Pabloites is the quasi-religious reductio ad absurdum of the primitive dogmatists - and the road separating blind dogmatism from mysticism and unreason is a short one.

The crowning absurdity of the "anti-Pabloite" sectarians, venting their rage on a myth because it has posed them real problems, is this

they say Pabloism primarily represents (or represented - it changes in form like a genie, particularly when yesterday's 'Pabloism' is today's practice of the 'anti-Pabloites', as when the SLL in 1967 came out for Mao and attacked Isaac Deutscher for criticising the cultural revolution) a capitulation to Stalinism, and as one of the proofs they say the "Pabloites" supported the Stalinist 1956 invasion of Hungary. This is totally untrue!

The current general summing up of 'Pabloism' is 'liquidationism' organisational and political. A tendency towards liquidationism has been a feature of the USFI. But also of the IC! The most liquidationist group today is the OCI, which calls for a united front government (the CP and the Socialist Party together with a stable French bourgeois state equal, it seems, a workers' government) - irrespective of programme! This position is denounced in the Transitional Programme itself, the fetish of the OCI. The IC is actually the most fundamentally liquidationist: dogmatism destroys, rules out, science, and if science is not the basis of our programme ultimately we liquidate scientific socialism back into primitive utopian socialism. This too is the tendency of the OCI-SLL.

XV: MUTATIONS AND THE MAINSTREAM

There are a whole series of political mutations which have emerged from 1938 Trotskyism. Of these the USFI is the one which, sharing our fundamental ideas - Russia, China, Cuba, etc - has attempted to grapple most seriously with the problems posed by post-war developments. Necessarily any development of our understanding of these problems must relate to the experience of the USFI. Nothing better exists, but we are not shopping for ready-made lines in a super-market. On a massive number of questions ranging from the precise characterisations of various types of Stalinism through the use of the theory of permanent revolution to the present ultra-left tendencies in the FI, the achievements of the USFI are glaringly inadequate. That is the concrete manifestation of the destructuring process.

XVI: THE ORGANISATIONAL REALITY OF THE USFI

In addition the practice of the USFI has consistently been wrong and inadequate to a very serious extent. For example, while the French OCI "anti-Pabloites" are certainly a tendency which hides its fundamental social-democratic orientation behind the hue and cry about the "capitulatores to Stalinism", and their trade union practice has been utterly scandalous - it is still a valid question whether entry into the CP in the early '50s could have been other than organisationally liquidationist.

The organisation of the FI was always puny as well as lacking after 1940 a politically tested and authoritative leadership of a stature to head the world movement.

Today within the allegedly democratic centralist international in actuality there is federalism. There has been and is an observable tendency for big groups to develop (a) independence; (b) satellites (OCI, SLL; SWP, Ligue Communiste). Clearly this is the result of lack of a solid world structure, of a really authoritative world leadership. Ceylon also illustrates this, where an allegedly international democratic centralist Bolshevik cadre organisation actually sheltered a mass party which was entirely social-democratic.

Inevitably there is an element of organisational fiction, bluff and artificiality about the FI as it has existed and exists. For example, the accounts of the Irish sympathising section of the Fourth

International in the other language press of the International bear no relationship to the reality as we know it. It is important to keep this in mind so that (a) the FI is assessed as it should be: primarily an ideological grouping and (b) to debunk those who fetishise the 'International' which cannot even be the beginning of the mass International needed and (c) to counter our own subjective tendencies to mistake wishes for realities and thus to give too ready credence to the organisation claims of the International.

We must oppose the IMG myth of the SWP being the 'bad side' of the FI and the Ligue Communiste the 'good side'. In the first place, the SWP is politically better than the LC on more than one important issue (China, Vietnam). In the second place, the SWP-LC differences do not at all exhaust the differences within the FI. (Note, for example, the IMG-LC-LRT (Belgium) differences on workers' control). Each major section has its own crotchets and particularities.

Within the general current represented by the USFI - as within the IC current and within the 'new class' current - there have been and are a vast variety of political practices. Clearly, the USFI 'world view' does not lead organically to clear directions for political practice.

XVII: THE F.I. IN BRITAIN

In Britain, the FI, though it warned us a year ago to join it or be damned, is actually the creator of the two most virulent of the pseudo-Trotskyist sects (SLL and 'Militant'). Apart from its politics and its actual practice at any moment, the experience with the FI in Britain earns it no authority at all.

In the past, WF has been ambiguous on whether or not we considered the IMG to be a 'typical' section of the FI. We were right not to jump to hasty conclusions.

The fact is that the IMG is neither 'typical' nor 'untypical'. There is no such thing as a typical section of the FI. Basically, the IMG today is a bad attempt to 'render the Ligue Communiste more profound' and adapt its methods of Britain (notably the 'periphery to centre' strategy).

XVIII: WF AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Fundamentally, though the concept of an international party based on an international programme of the permanent revolution, and the fight for such a party is our starting point, the forces in WF cannot build the full FI. We could conceivably build a revolutionary party in Britain. The ultimate responsibility for our role in this is ours. We can't abdicate it.

Critical support for the USFI, despite all its opportunist faults, has meant for WF fundamentally an ideological break with the "anti-Pabloites" and all they stand for. As such we have proposed and defended it at a number of aggregates. It would be disastrous to change the substance of it now. From the FI discussion, having decided on the organisational conclusions, WF must map out a whole programme of theoretical research and self-education, covering a whole period. The USFI's political contribution cannot but be one of our major starting points. At the same time, this position, given the IMG, is organisationally embarrassing for us. If a better formulation of our position as defined above can be found, then we should adopt it.

XIX: PROPOSALS

a) We should not accept USFI discipline now.

(b) Our primary task, the one we can actually apply ourselves to now, is to build a revolutionary communist organisation within the British working class. A major element of our assessment of the USFI must be what its discipline would mean for that work. It is sham internationalism that does not fight for the international communist programme and use the international communist experience on its own home ground. It is toy internationalism which subordinates doing that to cheering on revolutions and revolutionary movements in other parts of the globe (which we should do also), or which fetishises the bare bones of an international organisation in the way the CP used to fetishise the "great Socialist Fatherland".

(c) Any practical affiliation to the International must depend therefore on:

- i) how the IMG would relate to our fundamental tasks in Britain;
- ii) what it would mean for the programme of theoretical research and development proposed in 18 above.

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"THE ECLIPSE OF REASON" - THE IMG 1972-75.

As against the IS, the WRP, or the 'Militant' tendency, it is easy enough to give concise generalisations of the political differences between those groups and the WF tendency. With the IMG, it is - if only because of the rapid changes in the IMG's politics - more difficult to sum up with a neat formula.

Yet it is necessary to try to arrive at some overview, to advance beyond simply being bewildered at the instability and the recurrent political stupidities of the IMG. It is doubly necessary for WF, since the IMG is the British section of the world tendency which we recognise as the mainstream of post-Trotsky Trotskyism, and since, indeed, we do share a limited common ground with the IMG on the level of basic reactions to such questions as the struggle in Ireland, racialism, women's rights, etc. Either our judgment of the 'mainstream' is wrong; or our differences with the IMG are purely episodic and tactical, and should be seen as secondary; or there is some explanation of the contradiction "the mainstream - and yet grossly, wildly politically inadequate".

THE IMG IN 1971

In early 1972, just as WF was commencing independent activity after being expelled from IS, the IMG underwent a 'cultural revolution' and a change of leadership. This date can be taken as an obviously convenient - though still somewhat arbitrary - starting point for our survey. (The survey is largely confined to the IMG's positions on domestic British politics, leaving out questions such as Vietnam, Ireland, Chile etc, dealt with elsewhere).

From around 1967, the West European sections of the USFI turned from their 'deep entry' work in the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties, towards immersing themselves in the burgeoning student movement. In some countries, especially France, they grew considerably. But from about 1969-70, they faced the problem of how, from this student base, to relate to radicalisation in the working class.

'From the periphery to the centre' was the tactic worked out. It has been applied with some success in France. The Ligue Communiste mobilised its mainly student forces for a series of national campaigns, focused around demonstrations, etc - Burgos Trials, Indochina, Chile, Lip, etc. They hoped, and in some measure succeeded, to get sections of workers involved in these campaigns. In that way they would build up contacts, first among 'peripheral' sections of workers - immigrants, women workers, white collar workers, young workers, etc. - and later in the more central sections of the working class.

Certainly the Ligue was right in May 1968, as against LO, the OCL, and the Maoists, when it focused on taking the students forward in struggle, rather than sending them one by one to the factories; and certainly such campaigns would be a necessary and invaluable part of the tactics of a group seeking to turn a rapid student recruitment into a proletarian-oriented organisation. However, even at its most successful, the 'periphery to centre' tactic, elevated as it was into an all-guiding principle, had had political effects. It downgrades consistent work round the factories, and thus: (a) tends to build an organisation of 'campaign activists' rather than stable cadres. It tends to make the organisation a 'federation' of campaigns, rather than a coherent Leninist organisation consistently educating its member, and moreover makes it extremely difficult to integrate proletarian militants into the organisation. (b) It tends to seek to win people over through 'prestige', big demonstrations, spectacular campaigns, etc., downgrading the propaganda tasks of the organisation. (c) In relation to the labour movement, it leads either to an ultra-left attitude of 'injecting politics from the outside', in the most literal sense, or to accomod-

ation to the established leaderships for the sake of getting united campaigns.

However, in Britain the tactic did not merely lead to political mistakes, it reduced the IMG to abject chaos. By late 1971 the IMG was thrashing around from one unsuccessful campaign to another (Black Defence, Ireland, Socialist Women groups, unemployment campaign, youth movement, Socialist Trade Union groups....) accumulating only some 30-odd front organisations (one for every 11 members of the IMG), most of them empty except for IMG members.

THE 'NEW THINKING'

Thus when a group round John Ross and Tony Whelan came forward, in early 1972, with their 'new thinking', they were able to seize control very easily from the old, collapsing leadership round Pat Jordan.

The 'new thinking' presented itself as a critique of 'economism'. 'Economism' sought to 'mobilise the masses' by 'calls to action'. Following from this, economism had an 'administrative' conception of the revolutionary party, and tended towards political opportunism, the better to get the masses mobilised. This tendency was shown by IS, the SLL, and the SWP.

The correct definition of the role of the revolutionary party should be "presenting a rounded conception of the totality of social relations". Appropriate action would follow logically once the party had convinced the working class of that 'rounded conception'; it was no business of the party to make 'calls to action' (*1) The necessity of democratic centralism was deduced from so-called "epistemological centralisation"; for the party to develop its needed "rounded conception of the totality of social relations", it must "intervene in all layers of society" and centralise the experience thus gained. The necessity of an International followed from the same reasoning.

These ideas amounted to the most passive propagandism: a view of the party as an academic 'educator', unconcerned for the class's action. Moreover, the "epistemological centralisation" theory allowed for a purely religious adherence to the USFI; an adherence based on nothing to do with the USFI's politics, but simply on the fact that it was an organisation intervening (nationally, though not of course in fact) in all areas of the world (*2).

However, the 'new thinking' conquered the IMG rapidly and thoroughly. Red Mole was a rather abstruse propagandist paper, with headlines like "Struggle Decides, Not The Law". From January, through its formal endorsement at the IMG conference in May, and until July 1972, 'new thinking' ruled supreme in the IMG. While most IMG members clearly did not understand the long and turgid Red Mole articles and internal documents expounding the 'new thinking', and while the political 'numbing' effect of this lack of understanding was to have serious consequences, for a period the 'new thinking' did give the IMG a unity and an élan it has never had since. - - -

*1) Since 1972 a thorough whitewash job has been done by the IMG leadership on the 'new thinking': but the IMG did say, literally, "no calls to action". The crudest expression of this was in the IMG's programme for the LCDTU (which was published in the Red Mole and reproduced as a pamphlet, so cannot be dismissed as an aberration of an individual comrade): "The working class has no need of anyone to make administrative 'calls to action' - strike on such and such a day, take this or that action, or, adopt this or that form of struggle...."

*2) The ideas were, indeed, in obvious contradiction to the USFI's politics. For if the role of a party is defined as "presenting ideas", then .../...

The 'new thinking' - whatever its purely theoretical merits or failings - chimed in with certain practical needs of the IMG. It gave a rationale for the IMG to shed the incubus of its numerous 'front' organisations (*3). And it 'freed' the IMG to orientate towards the working class by - to put it crudely - enabling it to be ultra-left in propaganda, while not suffering the embarrassment of having to fight for active conclusions from that ultra-left propaganda. Thus, in spring 1972, when the NIRC fined the T&G £55,000, instead of issuing any call for action against the NIRC, the IMG simply echoed the evasive slogan of Jones and Scanlon - "No Recognition". And during the Manchester engineers' dispute of that period, the IMG's policy was: assistance to the dispute through the Claimants' Union; no criticism in their paper of the CP leadership of the dispute (*4)

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Continuing militant economic struggles, with IMG giving practical assistance through Claimants' Unions and quietly adding its twopenny-worth of propaganda about the need to smash the State - that was the scenario implicit in the 'new thinking'. As soon as it met with a struggle which demanded more immediate political answers, the whole framework broke down.

In July 1972 five dockers were jailed under the Industrial Relations Act. A mass strike movement, of some 250,000 workers, erupted, and forced their release, though not before the TUC had been pushed into declaring a one-day General Strike for the following Monday.

WF called for a General Strike to Smash the Act. The IMG found its neat compartmentalisation of propaganda and action completely broken down. It abandoned the taboo on 'calls to action' - and how! There were no less than 15 principal slogans in the Red Mole 'strike special', of which at least 11 were 'calls to action'. Missing, however, was any clear central direction, whether for the class or for the IMG.

In an inside page article, the IMG commented that the strike movement would probably lead to the overthrow of the Tory government. "A Labour Government?", ran its headline, "Yes, but what next?". Capitalist class rule, the article informed us, would still continue. Something must be done about that. The answer, it concluded, was - nationalisation of industry, banks, and transport!

As soon as the IMG came up against a real political problem, its gaudy ultra-left garments fell apart to disclose... Fabianism!

*4) The comrades of the present RMC, who led the IMG's intervention in that dispute, protest that our account in PR no. 1 does them an injustice. However, as yet they have not responded to repeated requests to write a correction.

*3) The 1972 bonfire of 'front groups' has had a lasting effect, in a generally sceptical view by the IMG towards ongoing campaign organisations. They have preferred 'conjunctural united fronts' - i.e. ad hoc committees, conferences, etc. This expressed itself most crassly in the IMG's intervention at the 'Rank and File' conference called by IS in March 1974, which consisted of a leaflet distributed to the more than 500 T.U. delegates declaring 'Rank and File-ism Insufficient'. One might as well appear at one's union branch with a leaflet - 'Trade Unionism Insufficient'.

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*2).../... then the Vietnamese CP is certainly a straightforwardly bourgeois party - since the "ideas" it "presents" (e.g. in its published programme) are simply ideas of national-democratic revolution, accepting the continued existence of capitalist property.

Bizarrely, the IMG combined this Fabianism with a refusal to call for the removal of the Tory government. The slogan "Kick the Tories Out", they commented (correctly) was used by trade union bureaucrats to evade concrete struggles; therefore, they concluded (in a fine example of idealist logic) the answer was to reject that slogan, and instead call for "struggle against the State".

The shipwreck of the "new thinking" was completed when, later that summer, the Red Mole responded to the racist outcry against the entry of Ugandan Asians with the headline "Asians: Big Chance for Left". It was the "best thing for years" because "No attempt to offer a solution to the working class can be made except on the basis of a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism". The IMG would thus have a "big chance" to argue the case for socialism. The possible further developments of this theme are endless: "Moscow Trials: Big Chance for Trotskyists"; "Black Death: Big Chance for Doctors"; "Third World War: Big Chance for Internationalism"....

THE APRIL 1973 IMG CONFERENCE AND THE USFI

The public comments of the USFI on the 'new thinking' had been confined to a letter from Mandel to the IMG NC, dated July 1972.... despite the fact that the 'new thinking' had been evident in the public press of the IMG as far back as January. Mandel's letter made most of the necessary criticisms of the 'new thinking' - but the manner of making them was to say: 'Comrade Ross has many valuable insights; however, he could possibly lay himself open to misunderstanding on XYZ point...'. Ross promptly replied that he was in full agreement with Mandel, except on the one point of the Transitional Programme; and that point, too, was soon cleared up by the happy discovery that Mandel and Ross were using the term 'Transitional Programme' in different senses.

However, by the latter part of 1972 two opposition tendencies - "BJP" and "H/K" - had formed in the IMG. BJP was mainly composed of 'old guard' elements, round Jordan; H/K of disillusioned Rossites (Gowan, Ali, White etc.) However, they were to bloc at the April '73 conference and later to fuse as the New Course tendency. (BJP had in the meantime shed a small grouping, "JAB", whose leaders later went over to the WRP and the WSL). Both enjoyed at least tacit support from the USFI; and both counterposed a policy of "General Strike to kick the Tories Out" to the Ross policy.

Thus the "General Strike to kick the Tories out" - only a few months later to become the dogma of the Ross tendency - was initially a factional counter-proposal against Ross! And, indeed, few other slogans could so thoroughly fly in the face of the 'new thinking'. A 'General Strike' - the supreme 'call to action'! - and not to "struggle against the State", but merely against the Tories!

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Shortly before the April 1973 Conference, the USFI issued 'Theses for Britain', soon followed by a document from Ali and Jordan of the proto-'New Course' tendencies, eagerly pointing out that the Theses were in fact a barely-concealed polemic against Ross. And yet at the end of the conference the Ross grouping still had control of the IMG. A few months later they put out the USFI Theses, slightly revised, as their document.

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The factional manoeuvres which accomplished this would have been impossible without the IMG membership having been battered into an ideologically 'punch-drunk' state during the introduction of the 'new thinking'. Nevertheless, they were remarkable in themselves.

In autumn 1972 the IMG had a conference on the question of

governmental slogans. At this conference, Ross, while still belabouring the opposition for its 'social democratic' notions, accepted a clause saying that the IMG should in Trade Union branches support resolutions for a 'general strike to kick the Tories out'. No-one took too much notice of the clause, and there was no sharp and immediate change of line in the Red Mole.

But then, in February 1973, the 'General Strike to Kick the Tories Out' suddenly burst into the headlines of Red Mole. The following Red Mole carried an article by Ross, attempting with tortuous ingenuity to reconcile the new policy with the old one.

We are, he said, in favour of smashing the State. The government is part of the State. Therefore we are in favour of smashing the government. Moreover, the government - so Ross had conveniently discovered - was, right then, the key instrument of the centralisation of bourgeois strategy (whatever that meant). Therefore smashing the government was not only something we were generally in favour of, but the key demand. Naturally, we favoured the most decisive means of smashing the government - including General Strike. There was no question of limiting the general strike in a social democratic way, since the replacement for the Tories was left open - it could be either workers' power or a Labour government....

Despite its peculiarities (e.g. the concept of smashing the State bit by bit!) this feat of logic-chopping enabled Ross to steal the ideological clothes of the opposition. Having neutralised their polemics against him, he took up two polemical cudgels against them - they failed to put the struggle against the government in the context of the struggle against the bourgeois state, and they argued for councils of action on a sectarian basis, i.e. that they should be formed round the slogan "General Strike to Kick the Tories Out". It is doubtful whether either of these charges was true; nonetheless, they served their purpose.

These antics of Ross - specifically, the adoption of the "General Strike" call - forced into opposition those in the IMG who had taken the 'new thinking' seriously and had some intellectual self-respect (*5). They formed the Left Opposition Tendency. The LOT, unfortunately - and they regretted it later - continued to argue that Ross was a lesser evil than the "right wing danger" of H/K and BJP. Ross showed no gratitude: he used the LOT as a "chopping block" to free himself from the stigma of the 1972 record, arguing that the LOT's views may have been all right when the IMG was a small group, just beginning to orientate to the working class, but now the IMG was big and strong(!) and had some implantation (?) in the working class, the LOT was living in the past.

And so the period of the 'new thinking' was liquidated without the least clear accounting, and with the Ross grouping still in control of the IMG.

THE DEGENERATION OF THE IMG

The IMG was certainly a poor caricature of a Leninist organisation before April 1973. The conference did, however, signal a real degeneration.

The IMG's ultra-leftism had always - so we have argued - had a counterpoint. Yet in 1972 there was much that was, at least subjectively, creditable in the ultra-leftism of the IMG. For example: their paper stridently proclaimed their solidarity with the IRA. Sometimes it was so strident as to cut the IMG off from any hope of getting across except in the student milieu - "Avenge Derry! Open the Second *5) The cds. concerned also say that they opposed the worst stupidities of the 'new thinking' at the time, in 1972.

Front!" was their response to the Bloody Sunday massacre, in January 1972. But it is impossible to imagine the IMG membership of 1972 mockingly approving the IMG's current crawling, servile support for the Troops Out Movement leadership's courting of Leo Abse, and virtually extinguishing solidarity activity or even propaganda. It took an intensive process of softening-up through unprincipled manoeuvring, from late 1972 onwards, to achieve that.

The 1972 ideas of the IMG were wrong, theoretically illiterate ideas, and they had a definite opportunist content. Nevertheless the IMG in that period was still guided by ideas - ideas, which, even though eccentric, could be discussed, evaluated, argued about. But the change of line on the General Strike had no possible basis in ideas. The line came first - motivated, in this case, by factional needs - the ideas and the arguments came later. This method is now well-established in the IMG leadership. On the Common Market, they argued that the EEC was the backbone of NATO and therefore of counter-revolution - falling into all sorts of factual nonsense (e.g. that NATO suppressed revolutions before it was founded...) on account of having to get round the basic difficulty that NATO existed for a decade before the EEC.

'Dirty politics' have gained a hold on the public work of the IMG - and no less so on its internal life. The internal debate since 1973 has been dominated by two major blocs, under different names - Majority Tendency/Tendency B vs. New Course/Wilcox-Klein caucus/Tendency A. It is entirely impossible to make out any consistent line of political and ideological demarcation over those three years; certainly no such line is visible to the bulk of the membership of the IMG. The leadership runs rings round the opposition, stealing its ideological clothes, pinning the most imaginary 'deviations' on it (*6), thoroughly browbeating it. (*7)

THE IMG SINCE 1973

The political life of the IMG since early 1973 follows a well defined manic-depressive cycle:

February to April 1973: 'General Strike to bring down the Government' mania.

April 1973 to late 1973: The IMG became pretty much subdued in the immediate aftermath of the conference. Instead of 'General Strike to bring down the Government', we heard 'Free the Shrewsbury pickets - first step to kicking out the Tories'. After some weeks' delay, the IMG had taken the Shrewsbury pickets issue up energetically. They made a few unsuccessful sallies at constructing a 'central strategy' round it - a register of militants prepared to join in flying pickets, repeal of the 1875 Conspiracy Act, and unionisation of the police, were some of the demands being aired for brief periods.

Later 1973 to February 1974: 'General Strike' mania, redoubled.

*6) Take for example Brian Heron's reply to the Wilcox-Klein (i.e. Blackburn-Gowan) document on the "Winter Crisis" ('73-'74). He accuses them of tailing social-democracy: "In reality because they think that the vanguard are organised and politically focused around the Labour Party, this conception reduces itself to a debate with right social-democracy, inside the Labour Party and inside the 'bourgeois political order'". While the Wilcox-Klein line on the Labour Party was, is at least questionable, Heron's account is a slanderous caricature.

*7) See Appendix for some brief comments on the IMG opposition.

February 1974- Late 1974: The election result abruptly deprived the IMG of their cherished 'central strategic project'. A whole period of floundering followed. The Labour Government was compared to the Allende government in Chile (which was logical, if kicking the Tories out had been the central question) - and workers were called on to defend it against possible sabotage or overthrow. The demand was raised for a "Labour government responsible to the organisations of the working class" and for a "TUC plan for the nationalisation of the economy under workers' control". Increasingly feeble attempts were made to invoke a general strike - first, "for a sliding scale of wages" then, "to secure workers' demands on inflation and unemployment" (it doesn't really matter what the demands may be, as long as you have a General Strike!)

The Troops Out Movement, dominated, at this stage, by the IMG, held its first conference in May 1974. The IMG hailed it as a burgeoning mass movement, and, in Red Weekly, scornfully denounced the "solidarity first merchants" (i.e. WF). Within a few months, however, the IMG majority became convinced that TOM was not the promised mass movement. They dropped TOM - whereupon the leading TOM activists split from IMG - and proclaimed instead a "conjunctural united front" strategy for Irish work.

The other main activity of the IMG in this period was anti-fascist work, where they switched in mid-course from an ultra-aggressive "Smash the Fasc" line to one of saying more "politics" (unspecified) were needed (*8)

Late 1974- June 1975: 'No to the EEC' mania.

June 1975 - today:

the IMG has thrown itself into its current "Left must Unite against Wilson" mania.

This sort of political life is explicitly theorised in no. 11 of the USFI Theses for Britain, which argues for the "General Strike to Kick the Tories out" as a way to... unite the IMG! "The absence of a unifying and centralising political line, axed (sic) round a key demand and a key political campaign... tends to increase centrifugal tendencies inside the organisation.... the adoption of a central political line by the organisation greatly contributes to unifying the cadre...."

This focus on a 'central line' and its effect both on the public politics and on the internal life of the organisation can be seen more clearly in the WRP/SLL. At any particular time, the WRP/SLL has one key demand - be it "Make the Left MPs Fight", "General Strike to Kick the Tories Out", "A recall Labour Party Conference", or whatever. Everything is centred round that demand, and it is the answer to every problem. Actual problems of what to do now, of how to relate to real struggles, are left aside in favour of the current cure-all. The "key demand" also serves as the crucial weapon against the 'deviations' and 'revisionists' outside, or, if they should be so bold, inside the

*8) In September 1974 the IMG turned up at Hyde Park for an anti-IF demo all wearing crash helmets (to convince the masses of the need for workers' self-defence, you see..) IS left Hyde Park to meet the NF (WF mostly went with them) and the NF in fact redirected their march from Hyde Park to Lincoln's Inn Fields. The IMG subsequently justified themselves staying put - not by saying that a united stand was better than sporadic 'publicity politics' sallies against the NF, which would have been reasonable - but with the claim that they had been conducting "the political struggle against the CP" in Hyde Park.

WRP/SLL, who are denounced for not fighting, or not really fighting, for this demand.

The IMG leadership has adopted fundamentally the same method. There are some differences - most notably, the IMG tends to proclaim the general strike (or whatever) as the pre-destined "necessary culminating point of all the current struggles" (USFI Theses, no.6), while the SLL tends to simply denounce any struggles other its recommended cure-all. Still, it has worked for the IMG, in its own terms. The "General Strike to kick the Tories Out" slogan did unify the organisation, leading the internal debates into obscure disputes about who was and who was not interpreting the slogan correctly. It did serve as a line of division from other tendencies. (In winter 1973-4, the Red Weekly published a series of polemics against IS, WRP and Militant - all based, not on unravelling the internal logic of those tendencies' politics, but on denouncing them for not taking up "General Strike to kick the Tories out". A more recent and even more WRP-ish polemic in Red Weekly belaboured IS for "refusing" to call for the removal of Wilson - as if IS were holding back despite a stormy working class outcry!). The "central line" method also served to help to recruit: in its most manic period, in winter 1973-4, the IMG recruited very fast indeed.

THE 'DEPRESSIVE' PHASES OF THE IMG

The WRP leadership has a highly developed eye for the main chance, no 'theoretical' baggage to worry about, party activity which is largely self-contained, and a membership which is sufficiently terrorised, isolated from political debate, and rapidly-changing to accept front-page headlines like "Four Days to Military Dictatorship" (February 1974). It can manage to do without the 'depressive' phases of the IMG. But for the IMG leadership, without those 'advantages', these phases, in which it tries out possible 'central demands', experimenting, testing, flushing out ideas, groping towards the next 'key political campaign', have a vital role.

An extraordinary list could be compiled of the various 'central demands' proposed (sometimes for periods as short as a week...) by the IMG during its 'depressive' phases. A few have been noted above. Space, time, and sheer nausea prohibit a detailed criticism of all these ideas. Indeed, the IMG leadership, curiously, manages to protect itself, both internally and externally, by the very number and variety of its stupidities. An architect whose design has one or two major flaws cannot avoid accounting for them. An architect whose design is crammed full of blunders, which he constantly revises, may successfully pretend to a novel and advanced super-r0coco style.

The existence of these numerous aborted efforts at a 'central demand' is, however, noteworthy. Each time we see the IMG leadership shuffling around the elements of reality as they see it, moving the "pawns on the global chessboard", on the look-out for a scenario to slot into.

THE USFI THESES: THE GENERAL STRIKE

'Scenario politics' could be defined as follows: one juggles speculatively with the various elements in the real situation; one establishes a particular combination which leads to an optimistic scenario; then one reads back a policy for the present day from that scenario. The archetypal example is the "War-Revolution" line of the Trotskyist movement in the early '50s.

The point is not that we should not speculate on the future. We should. Nor that we should not construct possible scenarios, and take them into account in working out our policies. We should do that, too.

The point is, to remember that reality is multi-dimensional; that there are objective processes in history, but that conscious intervention - "the consciousness of priests, or the consciousness of Marxists", in Lenin's phrase - can lead to one and the same objective process, substantially different outcomes; that "men make their own history," even though they be impelled by forces beyond their control in doing so, and exactly how they will make it can never be mechanically predicted, for it depends on consciousness; that we should always be prepared for the worst outcome, instead of relying on some possible, or even probable, optimistic scenario; that we can affect future events, not by hoping for them, but only by acting on and in present-day events, above all by acting in present-day events to build and clarify a revolutionary organisation capable of intervening with some weight in future events; that if we give enemies, or wavering allies, credit now for what they may do tomorrow, we thereby both free them from pressure from the left, and disarm the working class in the face of the possible treachery of these enemies or wavering allies.

For revolutionaries, scenario politics generally leads to self-cancelling-out, 'cheerful idiot' optimism that the revolution will advance, whatever we do. The 'Militant' is a very clear example of this sort of politics. But with the 'Militant' - and generally, including with the IMG - there is also a strong streak of voluntarism in 'scenario politics'. When reality departs from the supposed mechanical advance of the 'revolutionary process', it becomes the job of the 'Marxists' to whip reality back into line. Thus the confidence of 'Militant' in the ability of their 'class appeal' to line up the Protestant and Catholic workers of northern Ireland in a common class front, as required by the 'Militant' model of the world. And thus the increasingly hysterical 'General Strike' shouting of the IMG in early 1974.

The most authoritative exposition of the 'General Strike' line is the USFI Theses, already mentioned. They start with a panoramic overview, in the first four Theses, of the "historic crisis of British imperialism", and deduce that a "head-on collision between Capital and Labour seems unavoidable in the period before us". The vagueness and lack of concrete relevance in this overview can be seen from the total confusion of time scales - at some points the document seems to be talking about the historic decline of British capitalism (which has been going on for at least 80 years), at others in a time scale of weeks or months. Moreover, the USFI, in its European Perspectives Document, manages to reach exactly the same conclusion of impending Armageddon for every other country in capitalist Europe!

No matter. Once this general panorama is established, it takes on the stature of a veritable Law of Nature - "growing class confrontation" is leading to one (and only one) "decisive" class collision. No doubt the USFI would concede that this "process" may be retarded, may even take steps backwards. Nevertheless, History must eventually march along this path, and only this path. (*9)

In this situation, the IMG needs - so Thesis 5 maintains - a "central strategic project". If the General Strike slogan did not *9) When the Second International put its faith in the 'objective process', it was at least referring to a real, material - even measurable - objective process: the growth of industry and of the working class, the increase of socialist party membership and votes, the expansion of the trade unions. The USFI's "objective process", very often, sadly, has no tangible reality at all, being merely an abstraction from the USFI's hope of future big victories.

exist, it would be necessary to invent it!

There are, however, several contradictory definitions of this 'central strategic project':

1. "... the central strategic project can only be: support, extend, unify and generalise all current struggles towards the preparation of a general strike to bring down the Tory government and create a situation of dual power in Britain" (Thesis 5, our emphasis)
2. "... our central thrust (is) the perspective of a general strike to bring down the Tory government" (also Thesis 5).
3. "... we cannot exclude that the general strike could actually take place when a Labour government was in power" (Thesis 6: yet one clearly cannot have a "general strike to bring down the Tory government" when the government is Labour!)
4. "Preparation of the appearance of organs of dual power immediately before or during the general strike - or whatever other form the generalised confrontation between the two classes pending in Britain will take - is our main strategic goal...." (Thesis 7).
5. Thesis 5 speaks of the 'central strategic project' "incorporating and expressing the basic socialist solution"; and Thesis 7 describes the general strike as a "global class answer to the social crisis" - both implying that a general strike for workers' power (not just dual power) is the 'project'.

What the Theses actually want, clearly, is a scenario for dual power. Yet "General Strike for Dual Power" would be too crass an example of the politics of "wouldn't it be nice if..." to be usable. So they find "General Strike to kick the Tories out" as a convenient formula. A Left Opposition Tendency document commented on the first "General Strike" Red Mole, that it "would make just as much (little) sense if the words 'general strike' were throughout replaced by 'armed insurrection'". Much the same could be said of the USFI Theses.

THE USFI THESES: DUAL POWER

'Dual power' signifies a condition where both workers' councils and the bourgeois state hold power, without either being able to crush the other. In various forms and degrees, it has existed in Russia in 1917, Germany 1918/19, Catalonia 1936, France 1968, Quebec 1972 etc. A serious general strike, paralysing bourgeois society as it does, cannot but lead to dual power, unless it is derailed by reformists.

In a situation of dual power, the tasks and responsibilities of a revolutionary organisation would be raised to a high pitch. It would fight for the undivided power of the workers' councils. It would intervene in the councils, combatting the reformists. It would advocate the independence and coordination of the workers' councils, and the arming of the workers. It would prepare for armed insurrection. The disastrous right-wing content of the "General Strike to kick the Tories out" slogan is precisely that it would aid the reformists in that dual power situation - for the reformists would say, "yes, let's have an election". And for all the IMG's logic-chopping, most workers would see an election as a reasonable way of kicking out the Tories. This problem, of course, does not appear in the schemes of the USFI Theses: the bourgeoisie just stand inert as the Revolution beats them down.

The USFI Theses, despite all their focus on achieving dual power, are totally silent on the role of the revolutionary organisation in the dual power situation. In some places they give the impression that once dual power is achieved, we are on the "home straight" to revolution with no problems. Elsewhere, that "first time round", there is no

chance anyway of going from dual power to workers' power. (The second estimate is probably correct - but it does not in the least minimise the role of the revolutionary organisation in ensuring that the best lessons are learnt from the dual power experience, that demoralisation is minimised, that the best militants are won to ongoing revolutionary activity, etc.)

Second paradox in the USFI Theses - their whole trend is to argue that the creation of dual power is sooner or later inevitable in the next few years - yet the IMG's activity is supposed to be focused on bringing about this dual power which will happen anyway. And think a moment: how can a small revolutionary organisation "prepare dual power"? It cannot achieve the mass upheaval in the consciousness of millions of workers necessary to create dual power - only the "old mole of history" can do that. What can it do? - raise consciousness, fight reformism, promote workers' democracy and self-organisation, render its own forces more clear and coherent - i.e. carry out normal revolutionary activity. There is no special "preparation of dual power". In fact, in winter '73/'74 the IMG attempted such "preparation", in the form of setting up Councils of Action as embryo Soviets. The results were ridiculous. (*10)

Thus, in sum, the USFI Theses enjoin the IMG to do what it can't do, and fail to emphasise what it can do. The consequences could only be disorienting.

THE 'GENERAL STRIKE' IN ACTION - WINTER '73/'74

We shall sum up with some excerpts from an Open Letter we addressed to the IMG in February 1974.

"The event of the General Election has brought the tensions in the formula 'General Strike to bring down the Government' to a high pitch - and in the Red Weekly on 15th February they have finally exploded.

"If the Tories win the election, 'then a general strike to bring down the Government would, more clearly than ever, be the only (!!) means by which the working class could defend its interests'. But if the Tory government commands sufficient support to prevail at the polls, how will a general strike oust it? Only, to be sure, by bypassing the polls - that is, by armed insurrection....

"Or perhaps a general strike would totally change the electoral scene, and produce conditions for a general election which would be far more favourable than previously? Indeed, Red Weekly states that, 'If such a strike were today in progress there would be no debate as to the fate of the Tories in the election - they would be resoundingly defeated'.

'But general strike - and proletarian direct action generally - is not a tool for exerting electoral pressure.....

'The opportunist implications of the 'General Strike to bring down the Tories' line are even clearer when we look at the case of a Labour victory in the election. Then 'only socialist measures can protect working class interests from the crisis of British capitalism. A general strike would be necessary to implement such measures - the expropriation of the big firms, the setting up of workers' control, the establishment of workers' regulation of prices - against the opposition (!) of the ruling class, and to back up (!!) the demand that the Labour Government adds its seal of approval to such measures'.

*10) This is in fact a clear illustration of the difference between scenarios and 'scenario politics'. I would accept that dual power organs are, somehow and somewhere, very likely to appear in Britain in the next few years. But the IMG's politics are a different matter.

"What is this if not a peculiarly contorted version of a policy which the IMG has frequently and justly attacked in the past - 'Labour to power with a socialist programme'?.....

"A general strike by itself is simply people doing nothing on a large scale. It cannot implement socialist measures. It may well be a vital step towards the creation of a workers' government, based on workers' councils, which can take power through a confrontation with the armed forces of the bourgeois state and implement such measures. But to call now, in Britain, in February 1974, for a general strike for revolution, is ultra-left anarcho-syndicalist nonsense. To call for a general strike to bring to power workers' councils which as yet don't even exist - isn't that trifling with the working class?

"Perhaps it is a half realisation of this that impels Red Weekly to omit the call for a workers' government based on workers' councils and a workers' militia that is needed to make the call for a general strike for socialist measures even internally coherent. Instead, the socialist measures/^{are} apparently to be carried out without government or state action. Industry is somehow to be expropriated 'from below'.

"What of the Labour Government? Will it not take sides in this class confrontation? Won't the Marxist characterisation of Labour as a bourgeois party (with all the necessary qualifications) be confirmed by the decisive sections of the Labour Party machine lining up firmly with the bourgeois state? No... apparently the Labour Party is above the class struggle: it will stand on high pondering whether to 'add its seal of approval' to the socialist revolution....

"It is clear that the calling of an election has depressed the direct struggle. Revolutionaries must strive to keep that depression to a minimum, and at the same time use the openings presented by the election to advance our ideas through such tactics as demands on the Labour. But Red Weekly has not allowed its rosy daydreams to be disturbed by the hard fact that events in the bourgeois political system still have a tremendous weight in the class struggle. 'All out with the miners', it cries. 'The best situation for a general election would be a general strike'.

"Workers should 'strike to kick the Tories out' - not because such strikes would actually increase the chances of displacing the Tories, not because they would advance some specific demand... but because they would counter-act the 'fragmentation' of the working class: that is, because they would advance the Red Weekly's scenario! Such slogans indicate a totally irresponsible attitude to the working class....."

In short: the USFI Theses for Britain, as performed by the inmates of the asylum of Caledonian Rd, under the direction of the Marquis de Ross.

Even worse was to come. The IMG actually advocated - in their paper, at least, though I know of no IMG member foolhardy enough to argue it in the labour movement - that workers should strike on election day and march en masse to the polling stations. That way, you see, they would stop the bourgeois election 'fragmenting' them. And, when Heath hesitated a couple of days after the election result before resigning, the IMG issued a hysterical broadsheet calling for a general strike to "finish off" the Tories and for Labour to form a parallel government in opposition to Heath. The IMG opposition describe this well:

"Readers of the broadsheet were told that it would 'soon (sic) be necessary not only to drive the Tories from office but to smash all the institutions through which the ruling class exercise their power'.

Both IS and the WRP managed to mobilise for demonstrations against Heath without indulging in this sort of childish impatience and phrase-mongering - in the event most copies of the broadsheet had to be thrown away because they had become an embarrassment. The pedestrian unreality of this rhetoric helps to explain a curious fact: namely that the lead articles in the Red Weekly, although made over in large measure to the politics of fantasy, etc, by general admission, extremely boring and dull. The Jonesite (i.e. Rossite) fantasies have too little purchase on reality to represent genuine ultra-leftism. On the other hand they are sufficiently restrained by would-be Marxist pretensions to be incapable of the excited flights of fantastical politics to be seen in the Weathermen or Situationists."

THE IMG AND THE LABOUR PARTY

The "General Strike to kick the Tories out" line, right from its first adoption in early 1973, had logically obliged the IMG to argue that the Tory government was the vital government for the bourgeoisie, and that a Labour government would be a disaster for the bourgeoisie. Here, as elsewhere, the 'line' came first, the logical argument later.

The result has been a gradual rightward shift of the IMG, though still to this day it is slightly veiled by ultra-left rhetoric.

In 1973 the theory was developed that Labour was going through a 'Left Turn' parallelling such developments as the revival of the French Socialist Party.

In the elections of 1974, a vote for Labour was argued on the grounds that a Labour government would be weak. After the February election, Red Weekly persistently compared the Labour Government to the Allende government in Chile, and called on workers to defend it against attempts to sabotage it or overthrow it.

Apart from the factual misestimation (John Ross was instructing the readers of Red Weekly on how a Labour Government 'stimulated' the struggle of the working class at precisely the same time as, back in the real world, the Labour Government was successfully defusing a very nasty-looking industrial situation for the bourgeoisie) - such speculative politics can only tend to disarm workers in the face of the Labour Government's attempts, not to be 'weak', but to be 'strong' (i.e. to attack them); to disarm them in the face of Labour's attempts, not to 'stimulate' struggle, but to depress it; to lull their indignation against the real, present-day attacks of the present-day Labour Government by focusing instead on the possible horrors of a bourgeois overthrow of the government.

The general summing-up of the IMG's line in summer 1974 was for "a Labour government responsible to the organisations of the working class, not to Parliament". Let us concede to the IMG that when they said "Parliament", they meant "bourgeois state". (The days when governments were really responsible to Parliament ended at least 60 years ago). Then the picture we get is of a struggle to pull the Labour government away from the bourgeois state, and towards the "organisations of the working class" - i.e. since no workers' councils exist, in practice, the trade unions.

Very fine - except that the trade unions, as at present organised and led, do not represent a different principle from the bourgeois state. Indeed, the trade union bureaucracy is the chief pillar of the state. The specific means by which the British bourgeoisie has exercised its rule - since the 1920s at least, if not before - has been by relying on the trade union bureaucracy.

Of course, that does not exclude episodic, even serious, conflicts

between governments and the trade union leaders; and it should not stop us demanding from time to time that the Labour Government execute TUC policy on the Shrewsbury pickets, on Chile, etc. But a generalised slogan like the IMG's could do nothing but encourage illusions.

The anti-EEC campaign came as a godsend to the IMG. It linked in with a theory already enunciated in 1973, and implicit in the "government based on the trade unions" slogan: the "two class" theory of the Labour Party. This theory says, crudely, that the left wing of the Labour Party represents the (admittedly confused) proletarian component; the Jenkinsites represent the bourgeois infiltrators who have taken over the party. The fact is, of course, that the trade union stalwarts have frequently been - and now are again - the firmest supporters of the Labour right wing. They are as firmly tied to bargaining within the bourgeois state as is any 'infiltrating' intellectual.

Following on the EEC campaign, the IMG has adopted the slogan "The Left Must Unite Against Wilson". It would only be a slight exaggeration to say the IMG is reviving its "kick the Tories out" line by means of making Wilson a 'honorary' Tory. The Labour Party doesn't play the part allotted to it in the "General Strike to kick out the Tories" scenario: the IMG resolves the problem by attributing the fault to the right (bourgeois) wing of the Labour Party, lumping that wing in with the Tories (hence all the scare-stories about coalition); and 'projecting' a massive united-left struggle to sweep them all out.

As with the 'General Strike' line, the 'Left Unite Against Wilson' line, based as it is on 'world-historic' wishful thinking, is entirely vague and evasive in practice. At times it conjures up a picture (*11) of a motley amalgamation of the National Abortion Campaign, the Troops Out Movement, the Medical Committee Against Private Practice, and the Chile Solidarity Campaign, all clubbing together to fight the £6 norm! At other times, the revolutionary left other than the IMG is denounced for failing to join with the Labour left in some entirely unspecified united action. Yet again, it takes the form of pleading with the Labour lefts to join equally unspecified united action with the IMG. Take it whichever way you like, it's vacuous.

But the key thing is action - united action! On what programme? - well, that doesn't matter so much as being united. And it's not just unity in action - strikes, demonstrations - that the IMG calls for: the also appeal for unity in voting. Which implies that if Tribunites or Stalinists in a union branch put down a resolution for import controls, the IMG should support it in the cause of 'left unity'. So (and why not, logically) the programme actually advocated by the IMG looks more and more like Tribune's. Their "workers' plan for the crisis", in a recent Red Weekly centre-spread by John Ross, is actually a state capitalist programme.

All the key elements of Tribune's programme are there, 'improved' in varying degrees.

Import controls, the IMG recognises, are perhaps somewhat chauvinist - still, as good socialists we can certainly demand a state monopoly of foreign trade. But since they are calling for a trade monopoly by an imperialist state, not a workers' state or even a 'Third World' state, this amounts merely to a 'Marxist' formula for the chauvinistic slogan. As regards a ban on overseas investment,

*11) I owe this point to an otherwise atrocious article in 'Socialist Press'.

they don't even have that many scruples - they simply support it. (They don't say whether they have recommended to the USFI that it instruct all its sections to promote this new socialist demand for banning overseas investment... which might, if successful, put the clock back economically over one hundred years!)

The IMG 'improve' the Tribune calls for cuts in arms spending to 'abolition of capitalist defence spending': that is, to a demand that a capitalist government abolish the 'armed bodies of men' which make up the capitalist state.

Price controls are there too, despite the illusory nature of this slogan. So is a "plan to increase investment and expand production". All problems, it seems, will be solved in this booming planned capitalism "in one country" (as per dozens upon dozens of futile TUC recommendations) and we can have "wage increases - to reflate the economy".

One last twinge of conscience seems to have caught the IMG, however. They advocate a sliding scale of wages, to ensure that workers "don't lose their enthusiasm for the plan".

Too late, comrades of the IMG, too late!

CONCLUSIONS

"They have played the sedulous ape to every 'socialist', 'communist', 'revolutionary' current, and shown an inexhaustible capacity for seeing them not as they are but as they would like them to be - or rather, more or less as they should be within the framework of the USFI's teleological view of the "epoch" and the 'World Revolution', and its often revised scenarios extrapolated from that view, with the roles periodically reallocated, according to current events, for the 'already written' drama".

For the IMG, in the last four years, the 'star' role in the 'already-written drama' has been reallocated successively to the 'peripheral' sections of the working class, to the militant economic struggles of early 1972, to the hypothetical General Strike movement of 1973 - early 1974, and to the Labour left from 1974 (and probably for some time in the future, especially if the IMG seriously enter the LP). They never swing right over to a consistent liquidationism; they always have reservations and escape-clauses; every so often they lurch back to a more independent position or towards a new 'star'.

It is impossible to explain every single political stupidity of the IMG as products of some single fundamental error: the basic ideology of the USFI, as described above, provides the framework of instability in which sheer intellectual freakishness (in the case of the 1972 'new thinking') or unscrupulous factional manoeuvring (in the case of the 'General Strike' slogan) can have a big effect on the IMG's politics. The IMG's politics can vary in time as the politics of the USFI's sections vary in geography.

The Common Market issue can illustrate the specific nature of IMG's opportunism, by contrast with IS's. When it came to 'theoretical' exposition of the case for voting "Out" and of the benefits for socialism of the "Out" campaign, IS was notably diffident and perfunctory. But their agitation was quite unrestrained: butter mountains, unemployment, the Social Contract, the dangers of Brussels bureaucracy - anything could be thrown into the cauldron of their anti-EEC argument. In sum, IS has its 'theory', or rather its variety of theories; but for day to day purposes the vulgar politics of 'common sense' will do.

IMG, on the other hand, while somewhat more restrained in their agitation than IS, revelled in producing any number of 'theoretical' schemes indicating how getting Britain out would forward the World Revolution; and how, of course, the IMG should therefore put its shoulder to the wheel.

Trotsky once remarked that the difference between Lenin and the Mensheviks could be summed up by the fact that, where the Mensheviks spoke of 'processes', Lenin spoke of 'tasks'. In those terms, the IMG is definitely on the Menshevik side. IS speaks of 'tasks' - but its 'tasks' are the petty tasks of day-to-day perspectiveless militancy, not firmly linked to clearly-upheld revolutionary aims, as were Lenin's "tasks".

For IS, revolution is something distant and notional, prepared for only by encouraging militancy and expanding their membership. The IMG link their day-to-day activity with revolutionary aims - but they reduce the 'revolutionary process' to a mystical unseen force, permeating, growing out of, and guiding every struggle.

THE IMG AND THE USFI

We cannot and do not judge an International primarily by its British section, let alone the last four years of its British section. Yet we cannot fail to use our direct experience as the chief test of hypotheses we may formulate on the basis of studying the world movement.

The evidence tells us that the USFI is fully responsible for the major errors of its British section (one of its more substantial sections); that its 'European Perspectives Document' served only to blur over political clarification in the IMG (at the height of the early '73 faction fight, all the bitterly contending tendencies, with the exception of the tiny and marginal pro-SWP tendency, were declared whole-hearted support for the EPD); that the errors of the IMG concern not only possible mistakes of assessment of the situation in Britain (where the USFI could fairly disclaim responsibility) but major international and theoretical issues (the BEC, the General Strike, Ireland) on which the USFI is clearly responsible.

We have no reason to suppose that the International can guide other sections better than it can guide the IMG. And what sort of an International is it that cannot do that?

The IMG will accuse us of inventing political 'justifications' for our unwarranted factional separation from the USFI. Just the opposite is true. We have formulated and repeated the political differences while hesitating, for a long time, to draw sharp conclusions. We said: the Emperor has no shirt, no trousers, no shoes, we refused to say: the Emperor has no clothes. Now we must say it.

Martin Thomas: 15.viii.75

APPENDIX: FOUR BRIEF REMARKS ON THE IMG OPPOSITION

(a) They do not fight the majority seriously. On page 13 above, for example, we quoted them as saying the IMG majority politics are worse than genuine ultra-leftism. That's pretty bad! Cause enough for an all-out political fight against the majority. Yet the general approach of the opposition is extremely low-key and diplomatic. At the height of the 'Winter Crisis', they had in fact formally dissolved their faction, for the sake of unity at the 10th World Congress of the USFI.

In fact - curiously - they are to a large extent ideologically

parasitic on the Ross grouping, their ideological staple being polemic against Ross's stupidities rather than independent ideas of their own.

(b) They are paralysed by their attitude to the USFI. They endorsed the USFI 'Theses for Britain' (indeed, as we have seen, the Theses were originally 'their' document) and in winter '73/'74 were left abjectly protesting that Ross had misinterpreted the Theses. But inevitably Cardinal Ross, backed up as he was by Pope Mandel, carried more authority as an interpreter of the Bible than did a group of unfrocked bishops.

(c) They were responsible for the 'General Strike to kick the Tories out' line - indeed, they initiated it. That they protested against the most weird examples of its use merely shows that they have weaker stomachs than Ross.

They also share full responsibility for the "No to the EEC" line.

(d) A major point of argument between the opposition and the majority has been the Labour Party. In this debate, the opposition has made a good many valid polemical points; it has also pressed persistently for limited activity inside the LP/LPYS. However, the opposition's own political line on the Labour Party has been confused.

The BJP tendency accused Ross of not seeing "the difference" between the Labour Party and the Tories, in 1972. But BJP themselves apparently located that "difference" in a "hidden essence of Labourism" - made up of proletarian solidarity, class consciousness, etc! Such arguments are as arbitrary, and almost as dangerous, as the recent discovery of the class-conscious "hidden essence" in the anti-EEC campaign.

In late '73, Robin Blackburn developed the theory that revolutionaries should seek a "united front with the Labour Party". What he meant by this, has never been quite clear, but the formula certainly lays itself open to rightist tendencies on the model of the OCI.

The 'Winter Crisis' document already cited speaks of 'part (?) of the inherited (?) programme' of the Labour Party being proletarian. This theory was reflected in an amazing off-hand statement by Tariq Ali at an IMG rally. In most advanced capitalist countries, he said, the majority of the working class is social-democratic - except in the USA, of course, where it is bourgeois-democratic....

The 1975 conference formula of Tendency A focused on "challenging the monopoly hold of the Labour Party". If this actually means anything (which is doubtful), it could be a recipe for the most lunatic adventurism or for the most narrow electoralism.

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