

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO.33

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AGAINST NATIONAL TROTSKYISM, AGAINST
UNPRINCIPLED REVISIONISM

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(This bulletin has previously been
published in limited numbers.

The Internationalist Faction has now
informed the Standing Orders Committee
that it wishes to submit this document
for voting as its alternative to the
British Perspectives.)

Conference is April 15-16-17

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The fusion left three key issues unresolved: Afghanistan, the EEC, and the General Strike slogan. The agreement was to have a timetable for resolving these disagreements. It has not been carried out. This is an indictment of both old leaderships. The EEC discussion was not carried out by the whole movement culminating at a special conference, but at a poorly attended NC with no opportunity for the membership as a whole to be part of the debate. We do not intend to discuss the EEC in this document as far more important issues are posed, but suffice to say that the resultant position as published in [redacted] was inadequate in every way. Two key issues did not get mentioned: the rights and problems of immigrant workers in the EEC, and equally significant in our view, the unresolved national question (Ireland, Euzkadi, etc,) and the oppressed nations within Europe.

The Malvinas discussion revealed that the NC majority consider that one of the fundamental principles of Trotskyism, its major scientific conquest and contribution to the arsenal of Marxism - the theory of Permanent Revolution - is not applicable to semi-colonial countries which have gained 'formal' independence; and that one of the other major conquests of the communist movement, moreover, one that establishes the nature of the very epoch in which we operate, and actually provides the very reason for our existence as an organised political current, which poses the socialist revolution as a material possibility and necessity, rather than a task for the undefined future - Imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism by Lenin - is no longer applicable. However, having junked the theoretical justification for our very existence, the NC majority have so far failed to acquaint the movement with the results of their epoch-making theoretical discoveries.

It has also emerged that a number of leading EC and NC figures subscribe to a view of Stalinism which represents a break from the Trotskyist analysis, and which states that the nationalised property relations preserved as the major gain of the October Revolution, are not progressive as such, but only potentially progressive. In addition, that the starting point for our attitude to the anti-bureaucratic workers struggles in Poland should be 'self-determination', posed in such a manner that it implies an 'imperialist-type' of relationship between Poland and the Soviet bureaucracy (the Polish bureaucracy has no material basis in society but is just animated from Moscow), and therefore 'national independence' even in the form of a bourgeois democratic Poland (if such a thing were theoretically possible given Poland's position on the world market, and as Cde. Jones points out in IB 7, Poland would become a vassal of the banks) is both desirable and progressive. This demand can only mean support for a counter-revolutionary overthrow of nationalised property relations and installation of a pro-imperialist regime, as Poland already has 'formal', 'political' independence in the same manner as any non-imperialist backward country.

It is also apparent that while there has been a tendency to adopt an uncritical attitude towards the Walesa leadership of Solidarnosc, downplaying the inadequate reformist politics of this group; a scandalously hostile attitude has been in evidence towards the equally inadequate actions of the Irish republican armed forces of the Provisional IRA and the INLA, on occasions in our press. We believe that this is a reflection of the chauvinism towards the Irish struggle in the British Labour movement on the one hand; and the anti-communist ideology which has recently surfaced among sectors of the petty bourgeois left because of the criminal activities of the Stalinists in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, etc.

We believe that the source of the political opportunism of the former ICL leadership is their earlier background inside the IS group, where they obviously assimilated elements of the Cliff/Hallas/Kidron approach to politics: the eclecticism, impressionism and general theoretical dilettanteri. In addition, the influences from the State Capitalist tradition (although Cliff has in fact elaborated a 'Bureaucratic Collectivist' position in the Shachtman mould) has been compounded by a subsequent adaptation to the politics of left-reformism

in the Labour Party. In fact the one-sided analysis of Stalinism and imperialism gained from the IS does not conflict with the similarly pro-imperialist and anti-Leninist politics of the Labour left; on the contrary they fit in with each other perfectly.

We believe that the right wing of the former W.. represented by, most obviously, ed McVicar and co., have developed similar positions on Stalinism and Imperialism as the former I.. leadership, though via a different route, and as a result of the influence of the I.. leadership. It is clear that this is not a W../I.. conflict, but a difference of method and approach to politics between the right and left wings of both the organisations that formed the fusion.

On the LP issue, it is clear that ed Evington and others are in substantial agreement with a larger number of WSL comrades who formed an, effective, left-wing of the old WSL. In his document 'The Crisis of the British Section' it is clear that he had reservations about the formation of broad groups. From the title of his document it is clear that he sees a parallel between the debate going on in the organisation about how we respond to the O. witch-hunt and the polemic within the French section of the Trotskyist movement in the mid-thirties expressed in Trotsky's book 'The Crisis of the French Section'.

We think that these parallels do exist; that the former I.. leadership have turned O. entryism from being a tactic to being a principle for all time. The absence of virtually any propaganda in the paper for a new party and the need to reconstruct the FI; to organise an international tendency to this end; the failure to go on the political offensive on our programme; the decision to register instead of denouncing the Labour leaders, both left and right as social patriots; the absence of virtually any criticism whatever, of Benn for his loyalty speech to Foot at the recent LP conference (after Foot had gone along with the register); the absence of any sharp criticism of Benn and Race over their chauvinist, pro-imperialist positions during the Malvinas war; the absence of any perspective for challenging the Labour leaders' witch-hunting by a head-on political fight, to win our periphery to an internationalist outlook and an international tendency for a reconstructed FI: all serve to brand the paper as the La Verite of the 1980s (or perhaps it might more accurately be described as the Lutte Ouvriere of the 1980s, having emerged from its La Commune period in the S..V?) The parallels are so obvious as to be unbelievable. Now the former I.. leadership want to close down their Lutte Ouvriere and form a new 'La Commune' by liquidating into the 'B' groups (a 'La Commune' project if ever there was one). We strongly urge all comrades to read 'The Crisis in the French Section' and draw the necessary conclusions for our own practice. We are not, it might be stated in passing, against participating in the 'B' networks, just as Trotsky urged the Rous-Naville group to participate in the GARs then, but such participation must be on the basis of the Trotskyist programme with our own party press.

It has to be stated also, that the Workers Government slogan, as used by the paper (and as implied in the original fusion document), is an incorrect application of this slogan in the sense that it fails to make any propaganda for the dictatorship of the proletariat; in fact the amendment to the document on 'Organising the left' at the recent broad groups delegate meeting specifically argues against "counterposing the full revolutionary programme of a state based on workers' councils to the actual political processes within the actual labour movement". This transforms the Workers Government tactic into a necessary and desirable strategy, it becomes an 'objective', a 'stage', the dynamic of the demand is emasculated in the time-honoured method of the Pabloites and Lambertists; whereas the Workers' Government slogan was held by the 4th Congress of the CI and the programme of the FI as merely a possible variant.

The Workers Government tactic

Compare Lenin's formulation in 'Left Wing Communism an infantile disorder'.
 "... If I come out as a Communist and call upon the workers to vote for Henderson against Lloyd George, they will certainly give me a hearing. And I will be able to explain in a popular manner not only why soviets are better than Parli-

liament and why the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the dictatorship of Churchill (disguised by the signboard of bourgeois 'democracy') but also that I want with my vote to support Henderson like a rope supports a hanged man - that the impending establishment of a government of Hendersons will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will hasten the political death of the Hendersons and Snowdens..."(our emphasis).

In other words the tactical use of the call for the election of a Labour government, and the Workers Government slogan, "break with the bourgeoisie", "kick out the bourgeois ministers", "kick out Callaghan-Healey", etc, is to allow us to gain the ear of the masses for propaganda for a workers government based on soviets, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Radek warned against the dangers involved thus:

"The German, Norwegian and Czechoslovak workers will more readily declare against coalition with the bourgeoisie, preferring instead a coalition of workers parties which would guarantee the eight-hour day, and an extra crust of bread. A workers government usually arises in this manner either through preliminary struggles or on the basis of a parliamentary combination, and it would be folly to turn aside the opportunities of such a situation in stubborn doctrinaire fashion. Now the question arises - shall we recline upon this soft cushion and take a good rest, or shall we rather lead the masses into a fight on the basis of their own illusions for the realisation of the programme of the Workers Government...if we keep alive the consciousness of the masses that a Workers Government is an empty shell unless it has workers behind it forging their weapons and forming their factory councils to compel it to hold on to the right track and make no compromise with the Right; making that government a starting point for the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, such a Workers Government will eventually make room for a Soviet Government and not become a soft cushion, but rather a lever for the conquest of power by revolutionary means...'the Workers Government is not a historic necessity, but a historical possibility'... I believe the Executive (ECCI) on the whole has taken the right attitude when it on the one hand warns against the proposition of either Soviet Government or nothing, and on the other hand, against the illusion which makes the Workers Government a sort of parachute".

It is essential to realise that a government of workers parties is a capitalist government unless it carries out a programme which corresponds to the interests of the working class - this is what makes it a Workers Government, and this is what we demand Labour Governments do - this is the essence of the workers government demand, tactic, and slogan. But we don't just leave it at that; we have to put forward a strategy for the working class itself to form factory (occupation) committees; open the books; form committees (united fronts) of action (joint strike/occupation committees) so as to create the basis for an alternative workers government based on these organs of struggle. At the same time we call upon the Labour 'left' MP's in government (the Dennis Skimmers, etc.) to actually prepare to form such a government. We also call for the parliamentary Labour government to legitimise legally the workers control of production, the arming of the labour movement, etc. *as a tactical means of showing the importance of the LP 'left'*

The amendment specifically rejects the perspective of propaganda for such a workers government based on organs of struggle; counterposing to it instead merely the democratisation of the existing movement - the LP and TU's.

Trotsky in his article 'For Committees of Action, Not the Peoples Front' explains why this by itself is a false perspective:

"...The workers will be able to elect a committee of action only in those cases in which they themselves participate in some sort of action and feel the need for revolutionary leadership. In question here is not the formal democratic representation of all and any masses but the revolutionary representation of the struggling masses. The Committee of Action is an apparatus of struggle..." ('The Crisis in the French Section', P).

Thus, a true workers government based on organs of struggle will not be based on the existing formal workers organisations. TU branches, Trades Councils, Labour Party wards and GMC's are precisely such bureaucratised, formal, democratic structures. Councils of Action are based on the work-place organisation (factory occupation committees, strike committees), Tenants action committees, etc, in struggle and brought together in the locality when the struggle becomes generalised enough. Even if we are not in a period of immediate generalised struggle it is essential to "make propaganda for them; to acquaint the masses with the idea" ('When and under what conditions Soviets of Workers Deputies should be formed' from 2nd. Congress of C.I.).

In the ammendment it is precisely this element of struggle, action, revolutionary methods of fighting, that is absent - this reflects the leadership's lack of orientation towards the living struggle in their current practise, as opposed to their sole preoccupation with machine politics in the LP.

Does this mean that we are opposed to the struggle for the democratisation of the existing organisations of the labour movement? No, of course not, but neither do we see it as the objective of our activity; it is merely one task. People who see the class struggle developing in a linear manner according to some schema, rather than dialectically, get cruel disappointments.

THE WITCH HUNT.

The document by Cde. Evington on the way we combat the witch-hunt is consistent with the views of the supporters of this document, and should be taken in conjunction with it.

The basic points are that we can function as Trotskyists, as opposed to spineless centrists, in the L only on the basis of our full programme of internationalism, openly declaring the need for a British section of an international tendency for the reconstruction of the ILP; it means we must openly propagandise for TILC in our press; openly place it on the mast-head of our paper; openly accuse Foot, Benn and Race of social patriotism with respect to their pro-imperialist line on the Malvinas; openly publish the change in line on the Malvinas. We must obviously take advantage of opportunities in the L to argue our line, but when the L bureaucracy declare that this can no longer be carried out and shut off the possibility of presenting our programme and our attacks upon their pro-imperialist politics, then we are faced with a choice. Do we accomodate - as we are now doing by not pushing the need for our programme, a new Trotskyist party, a new international tendency; by not attacking the chauvinism of Benn, Race and Foot - or do we go on the political offensive in order to win our periphery to Trotskyism, knowing that this may result in our expulsion from the party? Do we regard it as a principle to fight for internationalism and an international tendency? Or do we see this as secondary to remaining in the party, knowing that the two are, at the time of a witch-hunt, incompatible? Do we see entrism as a principle, and programme not a principle? The answer must be NO!

Trotsky had this to say about the ILP disaffiliation from the LP in the early thirties:

"The ILP broke away from the Labour Party. That was correct. If the ILP wanted to become a revolutionary lever, it was impossible for the handle of this lever to be left in the hand of the thoroughly opportunist and bourgeois careerists. Complete and unconditional political and organisational independence of a revolutionary party is the first prerequisite for its success. But while breaking away from the Labour Party, it was necessary immediately to turn towards it. Of course this was not to court its leaders, or pay them bitter sweet compliments, or even suppress their criminal acts - no only characterless centrists who imagine themselves revolutionaries seek a road to the masses by accomodating themselves to the leaders, by humouring them and reassuring them at every step of their friendship and loyalty. A policy of this sort leads down to the swamp of opportunism. One must seek a road to the masses not through the favour of their leaders, but against the leaders..." ('Writings on Britain', Vol 3, P 94).

How could this be done? Clearly, Trotsky is saying - as he said explicitly to the French Trotskyists - that we have no choice about raising our programme openly; we have no choice if this results in our expulsion from the LP, as a consequence of fighting for our programme; but to accept it as the price of our political integrity. This does not mean that we should meekly throw in the towel and leave the party.

"Why have they begun (the expulsions from the SFIO) with the youth? The political explanation: because their heads are at stake. The plot of Blum-Lebas-Cachin-Thorez-Stalin has as its objective to sell the French youth to French imperialism. On the basis of this explanation a national campaign must be launched. The national conference must be held under this agis.

"By that I do not mean to say that the adults must leave the party. Oh no! We must not make their job easy for them. But we are all naturally in agreement that the struggle against the expulsions, eventually for the reinstatement of the youth, must have an extremely aggressive character: We accuse! We can draw up posters with this headline: 'We accuse the leaders of the French party of preparing to betray the French youth'. Our attack must in no case be impeded by considerations of party legality' ('Crisis in the French Section', P. 41 - our emphasis).

The parallels between the Malvinas episode and the arguments here are obvious. In other words programme, criticism of the SFIO leaders, internationalism first; threat of expulsion, as a result of this, second.

But how are we to, in the act of breaking from the LP, "immediately to turn towards it?" The ILP did not accept the advice quoted here by Trotsky, and failed to grow. Why was this?

"After it split with the Labour Party, the ILP came into close contact with the British Communist Party (...) despite its name it (the ILP) did not really become independent but turned into a sort of appendage of the Communist International. It did not pay the necessary attention to mass work, which cannot be carried on outside of the trade unions and the Labour Party (...). As a result it appeared to the workers as a second grade Communist Party..." ('Writings on Britain', Vol 3, P. 100).

And again in the same article, we see parallels with the split in the Tribune group: with the aim of forming a new group of MP's, carried to a split from the LP:

"The ILP split from the Labour Party chiefly for the sake of keeping the independence of its parliamentary fraction. We do not intend to discuss here whether the split was correct at the given moment, and whether the ILP gleaned from it the expected advantages. We don't think so. But it remains a fact that for every revolutionary organisation in England its attitude to the masses and to the class is almost coincident with its attitude to the Labour Party, which bases itself on the trade unions. And at this time the question whether to function inside the Labour Party or outside it is not a principled question but a question of actual possibilities. In any case without a strong faction in the trade unions and consequently in the Labour Party itself, the ILP is doomed to impotence even today (...) But isn't it a fact that a Marxist faction would not succeed in changing the structure and policy of the Labour Party? With this we are entirely in accord: the bureaucracy will not surrender. But the revolutionists, functioning outside and inside (our emphasis), can and must succeed in winning over tens and hundreds of thousands of workers". (Ibid. P. 107).

On the question of immediate work in the mass movement, Trotsky answered his interviewer thus:

"Question: Should the ILP seek entry into the Labour Party?

Answer: At the moment the question is not posed this way. What the ILP must do, if it is to become a revolutionary party, is to turn its back on the CP and face the mass organisations. It must put 99% of its energies into building of fractions in the trade union movement. (our emphasis).... Only the experience that comes from such fractional work can inform the ILP if and when it must enter the Labour Party. But for all its activity an absolutely clear programme is the first condition. A small axe can fell a large tree

only if it is sharp enough". (Ibid, P. 121).

Trotsky saw the ILP building up its mass base in the trade unions as a step towards creating the conditions in which it could apply the united front tactic to the LP later:

"United Fronts for specific actions (with the CP) could have been of some use, of course, but the only important united front for the ILP is with the Labour Party, the trade unions, the cooperatives. At the moment the ILP is too weak to secure these; it must first conquer the right for a united front by winning the support of the masses. At this stage, united fronts with the CP will only compromise the ILP. Rupture with the CP is the first step towards a mass basis for the ILP and the achievement of a mass basis is the first step towards a proper united front, that is a united front with the mass organisations". (Ibid, P 123).

Trotsky advised the ILP (in 1935) to stand its own candidates against the LP:

"Question - Was the ILP correct in running as many candidates as possible in the recent General Elections, even at the risk of splitting the vote ?

"Answer - Yes. It would have been foolish for the ILP to have sacrificed its political programme (our emphasis) in the interests of so-called unity, to have allowed the Labour Party to have monopolised the platform, as the Communist Party did. We do not know our strength unless we test it. There is always the risk of splitting and losing our deposits but such risks must be taken. Otherwise we boycott ourselves". (Ibid, P. 117).

From the foregoing it is clear that with the moves by Race, Cryer et al to split the Tribune group in order to preserve it from careerists, etc, as the ILP did in the period prior to their disaffiliation from the LP, we should be pressing them to go further and to adopt the same openly accusatory - We accuse! - attitude towards the social patriotism of Foot and Benn. The problem is that they can only be tested out in this manner by our own sharp criticism of their chauvinism, for example, in the Malvinas war. This we failed to even attempt. Why did they (Race & Cryer) fail to challenge Foot or Benn on this issue ? Could it be that they were aware that such an open stand - for defence of, and victory to, Argentina - could have driven a real wedge between them and the "fake-left", or even led to sanctions against them ? Were they unwilling to seriously challenge the pro-imperialist line of Foot or Benn, or could it be that they got no lead from our own press ? (When the "third-campist" and 'ultra-left' rhetoric was stripped from the line it was support for British imperialism also, just expressed through its Labour left face.).

The possibility exists that such a stand may be taken in the next period by an emerging ILP-type leftward moving centrist current. This would be a possibility when it becomes apparent that the Labour bureaucracy says - as they are beginning to say to Trotskyists and others - that they are no longer going to tolerate criticism of their social patriotic chauvinism in the ranks of the LP; when the opportunities to denounce the Labour leaders are curtailed via bureaucratic methods and witch-hunt. This was why the ILP was forced to disaffiliate. Evidence of this was recently forthcoming when a C. in which one of the writers of this document belongs - Liverpool Kirkdale C. - republished the 'Socialist Elector', the organ of the Liverpool Federation of the ILP, dated October 1932, just after the disaffiliation. In an article entitled 'Why the ILP left the Labour Party' by ILP leader Fenner Brockway MP, the grounds for disaffiliation was argued thus:

"However unsatisfactory the leadership and the policy of the Labour Party, Socialists would have been justified in remaining within it if its organisation gave a reasonable hope of changing them. This hope has now been destroyed (...). Always the ILP has been prepared to remain within the Labour Party only if it had liberty to express its socialism. Until the last three years that liberty has not been denied..."

The account continues and bemoans the fact of the TU bureaucracy wielding its block vote can be decisive. Today we would reply that this means we must work in the trade unions to introduce rank and file control. It was precisely because the ILP failed to carry this out, and via that form factions inside

the LP, preferring instead a close relationship with the discredited CP, that they eventually perished as a serious political force. The fact remains that the bureaucratic internal regime of the LP was, apparently, the reason for the disaffiliation. The ILP were not prepared to be servile boot-lickers of the Labour bureaucracy. For this they were to be admired - Trotsky, as the foregoing references testify, only quarrelled with the timing, not the actual disaffiliation.

From Trotsky's advice to the French Trotskyists when they were being expelled from the SFIO, the ILP made the tactical mistake of leaving the LP voluntarily; they should have stayed in the LP without compromising politically and met repression with a political offensive, denouncing the treachery of the Labour leaders: 'We accuse!' That would have inevitably led, in the natural course of events, to wholesale expulsions obviously. But tactically it would have led to the branding of the Labour leaders not just as traitors but as splitters too. In any case, the possibilities for the open presentation of the revolutionary case in the LP had receded, as it always does when reformist workers are forced, by the crisis of capitalism, to take our programme seriously and listen to what we are saying; this in turn forces the Labour bureaucrats to suppress and silence us in order to protect themselves.

The ILP declined as a serious force not because it refused to compromise politically, or because it left the LP; it declined because it was unable to escape the poisonous influence of Stalinism via its alliance with the CP; because the majority (Groves-Dewar group) of the 40 odd British Trotskyists were unable to heed Trotsky's advice to enter and win the leadership of the ILP from Maxton-Brockway (as the ex-Brandlerrite minority of Walcher, Fröhlich & Co had successfully done in the German SAP); and because the ILP was unable to turn to the trade unions in order to build fresh forces with which to regain access to the LP, using new personell, in new areas.

Being expelled from the LP because we refuse to compromise our politics does not mean we turn our backs on it; instead it means we have to, at a time of witch-hunt and hostile internal regime, constantly, via our participation in the struggles of the working class and the trade unions, recruit new forces for LP work; it means we gain fresh means of access to the LP through these new forces; it means that we have to work openly, uncompromisingly, and illegally in the LP sending in successive waves of new forces; it means we do fraction work involving - as Trotsky stated in the above references - people inside and outside. He did not exclude, later in the thirties when conditions improved, entry work if the potential recruitment of the left-wing of the LP justified it. But that such entry work must inevitably, at a time of crisis, be of a temporary nature, owing to the inevitable backlash from the witch-hunting bureaucracy, was made clear in the article 'Lessons of the SFIO entry':

"Comrades can draw important lessons from the French experience:

1. Entry into a reformist centrist party in itself does not include a long perspective. It is only a stage which under certain conditions, can be limited to an episode.
2. The crisis, and the threat of war, have a double effect. First they create the conditions in which the entry itself becomes possible in a general way. But, on the other hand, they force the ruling apparatus, after many sharp fluctuations, into expelling the revolutionary elements (just as the ruling class, after many sharp fluctuations finds itself forced to resort to fascism).
3. Entry at the present moment (of the Polish Trotskyists into the Polish SP) one year later than in France - and what a year! - could mean that the duration would not be too long. But this by no means decreases the importance of the entry: in a short period an important step forward can also be made. But what is necessary, especially in the light of the French experience, is to free ourselves of illusions in time; to recognise in time the bureaucracy's decisive attack against the left wing, and defend ourselves from it, not by making concessions, adapting or playing hide and seek, but by a revolutionary offensive.

4. What has been said before does not exclude the task of 'adapting' to workers who are in the reformist parties, by teaching them new ideas in the language they understand. On the contrary, this art must be learned as quickly as possible. But one must not, under the pretext of reaching the ranks, make principled concessions to the top centrists and left centrists (like the SAP, which in the name of the masses, prostrates itself before the reformists).
5. Devote the most attention to the youth.
6. The decisive condition of success during this new chapter is still firm ideological cohesion and perspicacity toward our entire international experience". ('Crisis in the French Section', P. 125).

STALINISM.

We have noted articles by cde. O'M. in recent editions arguing that the Stalinist states are degenerated and deformed workers states. However, this and his formal position of defencism with respect to imperialism attack, are in contradiction with his insistence that the nationalised property relations are not progressive as such, but only potentially progressive, in the sense that they form the basis for a political revolution to reestablish a healthy workers state, based on workers democracy.

His premise appears to be, as with the position of 'self-determination for the Falkland Islanders', and also with his position of 'self-determination for Poland' - as opposed to the demand for an 'Independent Soviet Poland' - that something is progressive only if it embodies human "freedom, liberty and justice, etc" as most explicitly expressed in the document by cde. Traven on the Malvinas (IB 12). Thus, the upshot of this line of thinking is the rejection of the method of Trotsky as expounded in 'The Workers State, Thermidor and Bonapartism' ('Writings 1934-35', P. 173) that: "...the dictatorship of the proletariat found its distorted but indubitable expression in the dictatorship of the bureaucracy". Just as the dictatorship of Mussolini guarded capitalist property relations in Italy; so Stalin guards proletarian property relations in the USSR. And: "The social domination of a class (its dictatorship) may find extremely diverse political forms" (Ibid, P 173). To clarify the problem further still Trotsky explains in the same article that: "the social content of the dictatorship of the bureaucracy is determined by those productive relations that were created by the proletarian revolution..."

Cde. O'M.'s argument would imply that the nationalised property relations are not the dictatorship of the proletariat but merely the potential dictatorship, the potential abolition of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Of course, the nationalised property relations create the potential for a healthy workers state which can take steps towards the building of socialism but this is not the same as saying that these property relations only realise their progressive character when this potential is realised and not before. Such a view conjures up in the mind the picture of a series of economies stretching from Europe to the corners of Asia, all "in limbo", neither progressing nor regressing!

The view that nationalised property relations in the Stalinist states are only potentially progressive also implies that there is no difference between these property relations and capitalist property relations. Whereas Trotsky, while accepting that nationalised property relations in the Stalinist states do create the potential for a healthy workers state, says:

"We establish the fact that despite monstrous bureaucratic degeneration, the Soviet state still remains the ^{historical} instrument of the working class insofar as it assures the development of economy and culture on the basis of nationalised means of production and, by virtue of this, prepares the conditions for a genuine emancipation of the toilers through the liquidation of the bureaucracy and of social inequality..." (*The Workers' State, Thermidor & Bonapartism* - p. 170. Writings 1934-35)

Note Trotsky does not say that the soviet state is potentially the instrument of the working class, but that it is still this instrument. The question that cde. O'M. has to answer is this: Is the social dictatorship of the proletariat represented by the nationalised property relations under the

political dictatorship of Stalin historically progressive with respect to the social dictatorship of the bourgeoisie represented by the capitalist property relations, under the political dictatorship of Mussolini - or disguised by the signboard of bourgeois democracy? Yes or No cde. O'Mahony?

In an earlier article, 'The Class Nature of the Soviet State', Trotsky ridiculed those who claimed that the dictatorship of the proletariat only existed in the early years of the revolution before the rise of Stalin, or as expressed in the Paris Commune:

"If Marx and Engels called the Paris Commune 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' it was only because of the force of the possibilities lodged in it..."

In other words the Paris Commune was only potentially progressive, *socially*. Trotsky continues:

"But by itself the Commune was not yet the dictatorship of the proletariat. Having seized power, it hardly knew how to use it, instead of assuming the offensive, it waited, it remained isolated within the circle of Paris; it dared not touch the state bank; it did not and indeed could not put through the overturn in property relations because it did not wield power on a national scale. To this must be added Blanquist one-sidedness and Proudhonist prejudices which prevented even the leaders of the movement from completely understanding the Commune as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"The reference to the first period of the October Revolution is not any more fortunate. Not only up to the Brest-Litovsk peace, but even up to the Autumn of 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to a petty bourgeois agrarian overturn and workers control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the boundaries of bourgeois society".

Thus in the first year of the October Revolution, the Soviet regime was only potentially progressive *socially and historically, (but not politically, of course)*

Trotsky continues:

"During this first period, soldiers (ie. peasants) soviets ruled side by side with workers soviets, and often elbowed them aside. Only towards the autumn of 1918 did the petty bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalisation of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat. But even here it is necessary to make certain large reservations. During those initial years, the dictatorship was confined geographically to the old Moscow Principality and was compelled to wage a three years war along all the radii from Moscow to the periphery. This means that up to 1921, precisely up to the NEP, that is, what went on was still the struggle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat upon the national scale. And since, in the opinion of the pseudo-Marxist philistines, the dictatorship had disappeared with the beginning of the NEP, then it means that, in general, it had never existed".

At the 1982 Summer School during an almost clandestine debate with the RWL over the critique by Eric O'Brien of the 'S & D' series by cde. O'M., he revealed that he genuinely stood by the content of that series - which we believe can only be understood as a critique of, and junking of Bolshevism - and stating (when directly confronted by the comrades of the LOR) that Thermidor was established in 1921 placed himself, in our view, in the camp of those described by Trotsky in the previous paragraph.

Trotsky ends the above paragraph with a contemptuous swipe at those, like Cde. O'M., who see 'democracy' as an ahistorical category divorced from the social context:

"To these gentlemen the dictatorship of the proletariat is simply an imponderable concept, an ideal norm not to be realised upon our sinful planet. Small wonder that the theoreticians of this stripe, insofar as they do not denounce altogether the very word dictatorship; strive to smear over the irreconcilable contradiction between the latter and bourgeois democracy".

The 'Socialism & Democracy' series in our view goes a long way towards doing precisely that described above, and it is not an isolated phenomenon.

Instead of seeing Stalinism as predominantly the counter-revolutionary agency of imperialism within the workers state, which, however, guards the progressive

property relations, on which it is based; instead seeing, also, the counter-revolutionary role and grossly overshadowing the progressive role; O'Mahony simply denies the latter role

We believe that this view is linked to the position of the ICL leadership on Afghanistan, Poland, the Malvinas, etc. A picture emerges of the adoption of bourgeois ideology, which raises 'democracy' the political form, above the social and historical content.

Cde. O'Mahony has admitted during the Summer School and at an abortive meeting on Poland in Liverpool on 14th. December, that the logic of his position is indeed an independent capitalist Poland, and when pressed by one of the writers of this document denied the existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Poland. What is even more disturbing is the view by this comrade of the character of the oppression suffered by the Poles. Leaving aside the fact that a Poland wrenched from the Soviet sphere would enjoy an equally oppressive relationship as a colony or semi-colony of imperialism, his view of the oppression by the Kremlin is one that implies a break with the Trotskyist understanding of the bureaucracy, and its characterisation as a ruling class instead.

Our understanding of the bureaucracy is that its function has a ^{contradictory} character: at the same time as it is an ^{historical} instrument of the proletariat, inasmuch as it is forced to defend its social foundation (the economy of the workers state) in order to defend its own privileged position; it is ^{predominantly} an instrument of imperialism also. Trotsky described the oppression of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, and the function of the bureaucracy in relation to it, thus: (incidentally, simultaneously making an analogy between the bureaucracy and the national bourgeoisie of the backward countries):

"One can with full justification say that the proletariat, ruling in one backward and isolated country, still remains an oppressed class. The source of oppression is world imperialism; the mechanism of transmission of the oppression - the bureaucracy". ('Not a workers and not a bourgeois state?', Writings 1937/38, Pathfinder).

In other words, the source of Polish national oppression is imperialism, the bureaucracy is only its instrument. How the establishment of a bourgeois Poland could free Poles from national oppression is beyond our comprehension. Perhaps cde. O'M. can enlighten us? As for ourselves, only the political revolution by the Polish proletariat, with its extension to the other workers states can carry out this task.

Just as the I leadership (and their converts from the old W.) had, before the Malvinas crisis, a formal position of defence of non-imperialist against imperialist states, which they junked as soon as it became a case of applying it to their own bourgeoisie; so cde. O'M. has a formal defencist position in respect of the Stalinist states, at the moment, but the political positions he adopts in relation to actual events (Poland, Afghanistan, the Malvinas, etc) and his ambivalent formulations, put a question mark over his possible position in the case of the workers states being threatened by imperialism.

AFGHANISTAN.

We believe that the original position of the W' and the T. C on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was correct and consistent with the method of Trotsky. For example, with the invasion of Finland Trotsky did not just proclaim that the democratic rights of the Finns had been trampled upon, and call for withdrawal of the Soviet troops in the manner of a petty bourgeois moralist; on the contrary, he recognised that it was a move in a much larger game, it was preparation for the coming war, and seeing things in their global context he attempted to formulate policies for his followers to actually play a role in events. Whereas the I start by seeing Afghanistan in isolation, recoil in horror at the invasion and methods of the bureaucracy, and then instead of trying to formulate policies to connect with the new situation, simply decide to save their honour by turning their backs on the whole nasty business and make 'self-determination' the axis of their policy.

This method which places self-determination above the need to defend the nationalised property relations of the USSR from imperialist threat is the same as that used vis-a-vis Poland and the Malvinas, and it is a move by the I leadership into the camp of bourgeois democracy, which, as the Malvinas

demonstrated, places them in the camp of imperialism when the crunch comes.

As Trotskyists we would not advocate the invasion of Afghanistan in that situation because it could not develop the class struggle in a progressive direction, could only assist the reactionaries in binding the masses to themselves, and be seen by the peoples oppressed by imperialism as something like they have experienced in the past from imperialism. Such a move has undoubtedly helped push the masses of the region into the arms of the Islamic and other misleaderships, and been a set-back for the world revolution.

As Trotsky put it in 'In Defence of Marxism' after the invasion of Poland in 1939:

"We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission: We were and remain against seizure of new territories by the Kremlin. We are for the independence of Soviet Ukraine, and if the Byelo Russians themselves wish of Soviet Byelo Russia". (New Park Edn, P. 24 - Our emphasis, and we draw attention to the fact that Trotsky does not call for the withdrawal of troops, nor for 'self-determination' for Poland, but for an independent soviet Poland).

In the same article 'The USSR in war' he makes the following point:

"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or that area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.

"Our general appraisal of the Kremlin and the Comintern does not, however, alter the particular fact that the statification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure". (Ibid, P. 23 - our emphasis).

At the end of this article he sums up the order of criteria in assessing the actions of Stalinism:

"...the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the preservation of state property in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution". (ibid, P. 26).

We might add that the question of self-determination for Afghanistan is subordinate to the overthrowing of the soviet bureaucracy. This means that if self-determination leads to an imperialist-backed state in Afghanistan posing a threat to the property relations in the USSR then we are opposed to it. It means that we halt the armed struggle, but not the political struggle, against the bureaucracy in Afghanistan until such a time when the reactionary guerrillas are defeated (or the indigenous progressive forces are strong enough to defend themselves) and we do not call for the withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces for the same reason. Instead indigenous revolutionary forces would form a military united front with the soviet forces and attempt to apply the proletarian military policy. When the indigenous revolutionary forces are strong enough to defend themselves against reaction (or when the counter-revolution is defeated) we demand an independent socialist republic in Afghanistan, demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops and intensify the struggle against the bureaucracy, preparing the political revolution.

As Trotsky again argues in 'In Defence of Marxism':

"What we object to about the Kremlin gang is not the expansion and not the geographical direction of the expansion but the bureaucratic, counter-revolutionary methods of the expansion. But at the same time because we as Marxists 'look objectively' upon historic happenings we recognise neither the Czar, nor Hitler, nor Chamberlain (nor we might add the reactionary Afghan guerrillas - our comment) had or have the custom of abolishing, in the occupied countries, capitalist property, and this fact, a very progressive one (our emphasis) depends upon another fact; namely that the October

Revolution is not definitely assassinated by the bureaucracy, and that the last is forced by its position to take measures which we must defend in a given situation against imperialist enemies. These progressive measures are, of course incomparably less important than the general counter-revolutionary activity of the bureaucracy: it is why we find it necessary to overthrow the bureaucracy..."(Ibid, P 28).

The PDPA regime in Afghanistan represents a form of Bonapartism. The PDPA membership seems to be middle-class military officers, and sectors of the petty bourgeoisie (the personell of the state apparatus, teachers, etc.), who seek to pull the country into the 20th. Century. Realising the status of the country and the hopelessness of realising any significant capitalist development and national independence simultaneously, this layer opted for the Stalinist model. The reforms it attempted to carry out were of the bourgeois democratic type (land reform, womens rights, curbing the power of the clergy, etc.) and in themselves progressive. That the regime used bureaucratic methods in the process was inevitable; equally inevitable was the generation of hostility to the reforms, thereby fuelling the counter-revolutionary activities of the landlords and clergy. But, we must stress, insofar as the reforms were an attempt to further the development of the productive forces in Afghani society it is our duty to support them against the attempts of feudal counter-revolutionaries to block them (It was widely reported that the feudalists were killing teachers, as education was synonymous with communism, etc.). So our view is that we do not deny the workers state the right to defend itself, neither do we support the uprising against the Afghani regime by reactionaries. Our task is to formulate demands to advance the struggle in Afghanistan against reaction and the bureaucracy. Concerning the uprisings of reactionary classes we agree with Lenin:

"No Marxist will forget, however, that capitalism is progressive compared with feudalism, and that imperialism is progressive compared with pre-monopoly capitalism. Hence, it is not every struggle against imperialism that we should support. We will not support a struggle of the reactionary classes against imperialism; we will not support an uprising of the reactionary classes against imperialism and capitalism". ('A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism', C.W. Vol 23, P. 63).

We affirm therefore, our support for the original W / T C position and condemn the failure to discuss the issue to a conclusion. A probing at the roots of this issue could well have given us a clear understanding of the politics of the I leadership, and foresight into how they and their converts would react in the Malvinas.

THE MALVINAS.

The position adopted by the movement at the special conference was only partially a correction of the original erroneous one; it changed the line from being one of self-determination for the Falklanders and dual defeatism, to one of rejection of self-determination, and to defence of Argentina from the time of the sailing of the fleet. The fault with this was that it characterised the original Argentine invasion as objectively reactionary because, it was claimed that the invasion demobilised the struggle against the Junta. The demand for 'Victory to Argentina' was opposed for this reason. The claim to the Malvinas by Argentina was accepted, but this, it was claimed, was subordinate to the reactionary demobilisation within Argentina when characterising the invasion, which was therefore opposed.

An ammendment originating from the T C resolution moved by W. minority supporters at the conference, characterising the invasion as objectively progressive, was overwhelmingly defeated.

The view that the Argentine Junta's motives were subjectively reactionary is not in dispute. The question is: a) did the reactionary aims of the Junta succeed in demobilising the struggle objectively? b) did the initially successful invasion spur on the progressive world-wide struggle of the oppressed? c) did opposing the invasion in principle as reactionary, detract from the need to extend and spread the limited struggle against imperialism to the mainland? d) would the implied conclusion for withdrawal of troops

(before the fleet set sail), because the invasion was allegedly reactionary, have demobilised the anti-imperialist struggle in its own way ?

Cde. Cunliffe in his document correctly made the point that if the Argentine claim to the islands as a semi-colonial country liberating a colony from British imperialism is recognised, then any opposition to an invasion must be on tactical grounds - that it was not the most pressing problem for the Argentine nation to act on; that it was a ridiculous adventure, etc. But the successful minority resolution opposed it on principle - that it was a reactionary invasion that demobilised the class struggle in Argentina. The argument being that, whilst the majority were wrong to condemn the invasion in principle (because it violated the right to self-determination); the progressive, legitimate claim to, and taking back of, the islands, was subordinate to the reactionary effect on the indigenous class struggle in Argentina.

The argument is mistaken because it: a) overestimates the extent and importance of the demobilising effect on the indigenous class struggle against the Junta, and; b) totally ignores the massive mobilisation that the initial invasion created against imperialism, which never collapsed into support for Galtieri. In addition the Junta was forced to grant political freedom to the left while the war was in progress. The mobilisation against the Junta did not collapse; it was deflected onto the real backers of the Junta - imperialism - and the ultimate source of the oppression. This meant not a diversion of the energy of the masses, but a move to a higher stage in potential. The generalising of the struggle of an oppressed nation against its ultimate source of oppression gives the possibility of (in the situation of a threat by a war fleet) the arming of the masses, fraternisation with the conscripts, and splits in the armed forces. Trotskyists would attempt to apply the Proletarian Military Policy in this situation, and give direction to the limited challenge to imperialism, and turn it into a generalised all-out anti-imperialist war, which in turn could create the possibility of overthrowing the Junta, and a seizure of power *when imperialism had been defeated.*

As Trotskyist in Argentina, our policy would not have been to advocate the invasion; but once it was a fact, it was necessary, as Trotsky says in the reference from 'In Defence of Marxism' quoted above, to "look objectively on (this) historic happening" and to recognise that, far from demobilising the struggle of the masses, the invasion raised it to a new level and intensity, with a tremendous potential for intervention, and what's more, directed it at imperialism instead of its lackey; to see that whilst the Malvinas issue was not the most pressing problem (a desperate adventure, etc.) in an objective sense it was a limited blow against British imperialism's right to use the islands for its political, economic and strategic purposes against semi-colonial Latin America. Once it became a fact, we should have given the invasion our unqualified support in principle. The adopted minority resolution implies that the invasion was reactionary until the fleet sailed...then it became progressive.

We would have been correct to be in the military camp of the Junta, but ~~not~~ its political camp, as the Bolsheviks placed themselves in Kerensky's military camp against Kornilov without giving the former any political support. There is no place for neutralism or placing oneself in the stratosphere above the class struggle and camps in conflict, that is the third campism ridiculed by Trotsky, in 'In Defence of Marxism' (against Burnham & Shachtman):

"There is the camp of capitalism; there is the camp of the proletariat. But there is perhaps a 'third camp' - a petty bourgeois sanctuary ? But as always, the petty bourgeois camouflages his 'camp' with the paper flowers of rhetoric. Let us lend our ears! Here is one camp: France and England. There's another camp: Hitler and Stalin. And a third camp: Burnham and Shachtman. The Fourth International turns out for them to be in Hitler's camp (Stalin made this discovery long ago). And so, a new great slogan: Muddlers and pacifists of the world, all ye suffering from the pin pricks of fate, rally to the "third" camp!

"But the whole trouble is that two warring camps do not at all exhaust the world. (...) India is participating in the imperialist war on the side of Great Britain. Does this mean that our attitude towards India - not the

Indian Bolsheviks, but India - is the same as toward Great Britain? If there exists in this world, in addition to Shachtman and Burnham, only two imperialist camps, then where, permit me to ask, shall we put India? A Marxist will say that despite India's being an integral part of the British Empire and India's participating in the imperialist war; despite the perfidious policy of Gandhi and other nationalist leaders, our attitude to India is altogether different from our attitude to England. We defend India against England. Why then cannot our attitude toward the Soviet Union be different from our attitude toward Germany despite the fact that Stalin is allied with Hitler?" (In Defence of Marxism, P. 209/210 - our emphasis).

Trotsky ridiculed the stupid 'schoolboy schema' of Burnham & Shachtman and pointed out that despite Britain and India being allies in the war, they could not be placed, in the method of this schema, in the same camp; that India was an oppressed nation which should be defended against Britain (to show that the same applies regarding Germany and the Soviet Union; despite being allies momentarily, we differentiate between the two and defend the latter against the former). The same applies to Britain and semi-colonial Argentina today; despite being allies, they are not in the same camp as the Burnham & Shachtman schema might claim, as do the ex-majority. In the article already quoted above, Trotsky puts it absolutely clear:

"...we strictly differentiate between oppressor and oppressed bourgeois countries and we consider it our duty to support the latter against the former. The bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries is a semi-ruling, semi-oppressed class". ('Not a workers and not a bourgeois state?', Writings 1937/38, Pathfinder, *-our emphasis*)

While we would not claim that the ex-majority leadership hold the same, ^{identical} 'schoolboy' view on camps as Burnham & Shachtman, there are similarities in method, and their neutralist, dual defeatist stance in the Malvinas conflict did place them in an effective 'third camp' of petty bourgeois moralism and 'democratic', hand-wringing abstention; which was in its essence, in calling for self-determination for the Falklanders, in effect, objectively pro-imperialist *it went and pacifist at best.*

While we would not ^{yet} liken the ex-majority leadership to the Burnham and Shachtman group of renegades from Trotskyism, we do think that a number of signs indicate distinct similarities in method. The Shachtmanites started out also by putting into question the progressive nature of nationalised property relations, taking positions in the class struggle based on petty bourgeois moralism and 'democracy', and coming out in favour of self-determination against the defence of the bureaucratised workers state. After a brief period of seeing the degenerate (bureaucratic collectivist) workers state as more progressive than capitalism, they changed into seeing it as less progressive, and the logic of this made them end up as apologists for imperialism. The response by T. Cliff to the Korean war stems from his analysis of the bureaucracy (an eclectic variant of Shachtman's original analysis), and we see parallels with the ex-majority position on the Malvinas.

We believe that the ex-majority line echoed and reflected within the ranks of the W, the social patriotic wave rife in the working class, and the moralism of the petty bourgeois Labour left. We see a thread running through the positions of the ex-I leadership nucleus, from the Malvinas to Poland, to Afghanistan, to Ireland, etc. It is no coincidence that every time Irish republicans take military action which costs civilian lives - especially in Britain - the same people capitulate, and if they don't end up joining the condemnations of the media, they distance themselves from it in an unprincipled manner. We believe that these people have accommodated to alien class pressures, especially coming from the Labour lefts, and it was no coincidence that Benn and Race were prominently featured in S' during the Malvinas war, in spite of both having unequivocal, pro-imperialist positions. There was no difference in essence between the line of the ex-majority, and that of Race, Benn, and even Foot. In the last analysis S' had the same line as one of the positions of British imperialism!

Ireland.

As we point out above, we see a link between a whole series of political positions taken by Cde. O'M. - usually, but not in all cases, with support from the same elements - which we characterise as adaptation to alien class pressure. It has been said that some of these positions are the private view of Cde. O'M., but the problem is that they feature in articles, and even form the basis of public positions of the W. Our purpose in this document is not to deal with Ireland in general, but to make some key points relevant to the overall context of the document.

Cde. O'M. has made many bizarre and outrageous statements on Ireland in the recent past, but in his typical manner he leaves them open to various interpretations and never actually spells out exactly what he means, the logic of it, and the tasks flowing from it. So let us look at something fairly concrete, the NC minutes from October '81 in IB 3.

"But the bourgeois-democratic revolution was accomplished, as much it actually went, from above in the late 19th. and early 20th. century". And: "The south is a normal developed bourgeois society". Again: "Completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution is not the issue".

The above statements by Cde. O'Mahony are fantastic coming from someone professing allegiance to Trotskyism! Even a superficial look at the reality of Ireland today refutes these claims. For instance, the domination of the Irish economy by European and US capital; the lack of a really powerful Irish bourgeoisie; the existence of a mass anti-imperialist nationalist base which expresses itself at periods such as after 'Bloody Sunday', or during the H-Block campaign, and gives sustenance to 'republican' fakers of the Sile De Valera stripe in Fianna Fail; the fact that both main bourgeois parties have to take account of that consciousness, make 'non-aligned' and 'third-worldist' gestures internationally, while in fact being incapable of a genuine independent foreign policy; the non-existence of a strong LP; the massive continued emigration from Ireland, the permanent unemployment, the low population; the cultural domination and particularly the continued decline of the native tongue; and the very existence of the border and the presence of foreign troops in the 6-counties.

Nationalism exists in all Ireland because the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution were never completed. Most obviously, geographical unity has not been established, and neither has real political independence been achieved even in the formally independent 26-counties; the Dublin regime is a lackey of London. Whereas in the 6-counties a police-state has existed since the state was set up; political democracy has never existed in this occupied part of Ireland, annexed by British imperialism.

Cde. O'M. also makes the incredible statement that: "Partition is reactionary not on general principle but because of the intermeshing of the communities". In his view the partition of Ireland into two mini-states under the domination of British imperialism is fine; the problem is the directly oppressed minority in the 6-counties. From here it isn't very far from proposing the exchange of population! In the same minutes he sees the proposal by Fine Gael leader FitzGerald - the more open boot-licker of the Brits - to change the constitution and give up the claim by Dublin to be the all-Irish government, in a positive light!

During the Merseyside aggregate to discuss the Malvinas held in Runcorn (13.6.82), Tom C. - bussed into the area to mobilise support for the line of - said something to the effect that if all the unionist population lived on an island off the Irish coast, the Minority would probably be in favour of invasion, the pulling down of the union flag and hoisting the tricolour. Cde. O'M. laughed and clapped at this pathetic sign of bankruptcy, but the joke is on him. If such an island did exist, and under British rule, it would still represent oppression of the Irish people, it would be an imperialist enclave, a permanent base and threat to Ireland, as is the Malvinas to Argentina or Guantanamo to Cuba, etc.

In various articles, and in the minuted NC discussion - according to Cde. Johnson - Cde. O'M suggests "that Ireland is or might be imperialist". We would welcome an explanation of how Ireland (apparently along with Argentina) managed to extricate itself from imperialist oppression, and became an oppressor. If this is the case, not only was Lenin wrong about imperialism, so was Trotsky about Permanent Revolution. Perhaps the bourgeoisie is more progressive than our movement foresaw, perhaps we have to experience a whole epoch of imperialist progress before socialism is on the agenda in the backward countries. Perhaps Trotskyism is not yet necessary in those countries. These positions of Cde. O'M have shattering implications for our movement, it is unforgivable of him to be so shy about expounding his important theoretical 'discoveries'.

Republican bombings.

The same NC minutes discuss the republican bombings in Britain and our attitude. The EC position, and subsequent NC position represent a cowardly unprincipled position, unworthy of Trotskyists in our view. To join in the condemnation of actions in Britain at the height of media hysteria is to stab the anti-imperialist movement in the back. All the TILC comrades at the Summer School agreed with us; in particular Cde. Marcos from Spain, who drew parallels to attitudes in Spain towards the Basque ETA actions. It is no accident that it is the W which is out of step!

Equally, to make distinctions between military and civilian targets is to imply that the republicans are deliberately involved in a perverse attack upon non-combatants; that they are the irrational psychopaths that the chauvinist British media portray them as. To imply this in a Trotskyist organ is to assist the gutter press in confusing socialists and working class militants. Our task in an imperialist country is to emphasise to British workers the legitimate rights of the oppressed to fight back; and to place the blame for the violence where it belongs - on the oppressor. We must say that the only way to end the violence is to end the oppression; as a first step the British workers must fight to get troops out now!

Trotsky was scathing in his attitude towards socialists who equivocated in supporting the uprisings of the oppressed peoples against the imperialist metropolis:

"The socialist who aids directly or indirectly in perpetuating the privileged position of one nation at the expense of another, who accommodates himself to colonial slavery, who draws a line of distinction between races and colours in matters of human rights, who helps the bourgeoisie of the metropolis to maintain its rule over the colonies instead of aiding the armed uprising of the colonies; the British socialist who fails to support by all means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy - such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet, but in no case merits either a mandate or the confidence of the proletariat". (Writings on Britain, Vol 3, P. 159 - our emphasis throughout).

Against 'National Trotskyism'.

To carry out our historic tasks the perspective and basis for all our activity in the labour movement, especially in the fight against the LP witch-hunt, is the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International; as a step towards that aim an international tendency organised on the basis of democratic-centralism is required to intervene on an international scale in such a process.

It is no accident that the terms of the LP register include a clause requesting information about international links. It is no accident that the witch-hunters are all, without exception, rabid chauvinists supporting British imperialism consistently. The same can be said about most of the Labour left MP's. Even Benn does not argue for the actual independence of

Ireland, but for a semi-colonial solution (Zimbabwe-style). To ensure such an outcome he poses the UN overseeing such a shift; at the same time he opposes the armed struggle of the oppressed nationalists, whether in the form of guerrilla struggle, or in the form of the working class led strategy of Permanent Revolution.

The counterposition of a democratic-centralist reconstructed FI to such chauvinism, whether open or less open, raises the crucial question of an alliance with the working class internationally, or an alliance with the imperialist bourgeoisie of 'our nation' against them, there's no middle way.

This question lies at the heart of the witch-hunt as it always has in any major confrontation with the Labour leadership, right or left.

In the mid-thirties Trotsky advised his French co-thinkers to fight the witch-hunt in the SFIO (the name then of the SP), by branding openly the socialist leaders and left-centrists (Marceau Pivert et al) as 'social patriots' who were preparing to sell the French youth to the imperialists in the then approaching war; and by counterposing openly the need for the Fourth International and a French section of it, even if it meant being expelled for 'splitting' the SFIO.

The call for socialists in the SFIO to form a 'new' French section of an international party counterposed sharply the need for international class politics and organisation, to the chauvinist nationalism of the SFIO leaders with their national party tied to the French bourgeoisie.

We might ask those who argue for applying to be on the register: Would they accept that we must make the slogan of an international tendency for the reconstruction of the FI, and the need for a British section of such a tendency a central plank of our fight against the witch-hunt of the chauvinist LP leaders?

If such a method of combatting the witch-hunt were accepted, how could an application to register be seriously contemplated, as one of the conditions of registering is the renunciation of international links other than the pro-imperialist Socialist International?

Could it be that these same members regard LP membership as a principle; and the fight against the chauvinism of the LP leaders, and a campaign to recruit the best Labour activists to the British section of an international party as not a principle? Could it be that the so-called 'tactic' of applying to the register is in reality subordination of the principle of internationalism to the 'principle' of indefinite membership of the LP?

Does this explain why all the resistance to the formation of our international tendency has come from these same members? Has this resistance any connection with the sharp criticism by the TILC sections of their opportunism toward the Labour left, and their chauvinist position on the Malvinas; their failure to criticise the Benn's and Reg Race's for their reactionary line on the Malvinas; for allowing Race to use the columns

to spread his chauvinist poison without any editorial comment, etc, etc? Is not the failure to support the revolt of the oppressed (whether in the Irish or Argentine case) a capitulation to chauvinism at worst, and a reinforcement of the pacifist prejudices of the petty bourgeoisie (including the Labour left leaders) at best? Was it not a case of craven pacifism the way the editorial of 112 reacted to the Ballykelly bombing? Are we in the L to strengthen the already existing bourgeois ideology; or are we there, as Trotsky put it, "to aid by all possible means the armed struggle of the colonial masses"; that is, to challenge these backward prejudices?

We will only successfully build sections of an international tendency in the colonial and semi-colonial world if we are seen to be actively combatting chauvinism, pacifism and moralism in all its manifestations

in the British labour movement, even if it means being hounded out of 'her majesty's British Labour Party.'

In our document we have attempted to indicate the thread linking a whole series of positions which we characterise as adaptation to alien class pressure. At the centre of this we see the opportunist orientation to the Labour lefts and adaptation to their backward nationalist outlook. Coupled to this is the 'national Trotskyist' outlook of the old I, and a refusal to fight these features by most of the ex-W leadership. Furthermore, the departure from programmatic fundamentals which we have sketched out (imperialism, permanent revolution, stalinism, the workers government, etc.) have been ignored until we feel the W has reached a position where it has no solid political basis; mundane conjunctural tasks and subjective ideas are holding it back from collapse. The time has come to ring the storm-bell before it is too late and the W is lost as an organisation basing itself on the Transitional Programme, the FI, and everything it has stood for throughout history. A fight has to be waged against 'unprincipled revisionism' (the junking of theory and programme without acknowledgement). This revisionism is not just a matter of 'wrong theory', but of accepting the viewpoints of alien class forces: basically the views predominant in the mainly petty bourgeois Labour left.

We are not sectarians, we are not impatient, we have with hindsight been too patient. The roots of today's degeneration are contained in the fusion document. The W in its time - correctly - criticised the unprincipled and shaky cobble-up of the formations which founded the FI(IC), and the Theses it was based on as vague, evasive, diplomatic, etc. Compared to the fusion document the FI(IC) Theses are a sophisticated and principled document!

The groupings of the TILC were dubious about the basis of the fusion from the start; amendments were made at their insistence - though inadequate. Periodically since then TILC comrades have questioned aspects of policy: on Ireland, Poland, the Workers Government, Stalinism, the LP orientation, and more. In April '82 the LP line was criticised verbally by the LOR, which they then set down on paper for discussion. By the Summer School, with the Malvinas as a serious test which the W failed, the LOR was convinced that revisionism was in full flower and wanted to start a struggle within TILC to combat it. The LOR were dissuaded - wrongfully in our view - by the RWL to wait. However, with the situation degenerating rapidly, the chauvinism continuing and the 'national Trotskyism' gaining the upper hand, the LOR & RWL decided to set up a tendency within TILC to combat revisionism and to save TILC. We certainly see the need for such a tendency and only regret the tardiness of its launching. We call upon all those comrades of both old organisations who regard themselves as adherents of the Transitional Programme and the fight for the Fourth International to join us in the struggle against unprincipled revisionism and national Trotskyism.

Chris E
Sue F
Mike J

PS.

The W leadership took the regrettable decision to refuse to discuss the Malvinas in a projected bulletin of discussion between TILC and the FIT (Fourth Internationalist Tendency) - an international formation mainly in Latin America. This was against the wishes of at least LOR, RWL & TAF.

We believe that the Malvinas gives the best opportunity to discuss the key problems facing Trotskyists today vis-a-vis backward countries. The FIT theoretical journal 'Internacionalismo' No 5 has the bulk of the articles devoted to the Malvinas; one criticises the line of , carefully dissects it and exposes it for what it is. We have translated it, and interested comrades can get it by contacting us.