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Statement from Roger

It has been clear since the debate over the Malvinas that the fusion between the I** and the W** has been in danger of disintegration. It is now clear to me, and I suspect clear to a number of other comrades, that the fusion exists now in name only. I have therefore decided to resign from the League and the broad groups, as I have no wish to join either the majority or minority faction in presiding over the death agony of the League. The immediate reason for my decision to resign is the contents of IBs 78 and 79. If the majority and minority cannot even cooperate in the production of the organisation's press, it is clear that we do not have the nucleus of the revolutionary party in the form of the League, but two competing organisations, with a formal split being inevitable sooner or later.

It is also my deeply-held view that the ex-leadership of the I** must take the lion's share of the blame for this state of affairs. I, like a small number of comrades in the I**, was dubious about the broad groups tactic. I saw it as the beginnings of a Militant-type entryism into the Labour Party, and an abandonment of the shallow entry tactic initially carried out by Workers' A****. I was concerned as to how the I** would maintain a presence outside of the LP, and therefore as to how the organisation would argue the case for an independent revolutionary party.

However my disagreements with the tactic (which I expressed at the conference where the I** decided to establish the broad groups) came to an end when the I** and the W** fused. This was because the essential basis of that fusion was the building of the new League into a revolutionary party, along with the essential task of contributing to the building of a new revolutionary international. The immediate practical consequence of this was that the new League would have the same type of public profile as the old W** had, and indeed the original I** had, for the first few years after its creation in 1975.

As comrade Cunliffe makes clear in IB 78, this political basis of the fusion was reneged on by the leadership of the ex-I**, and in retrospect the liquidation of the new W** started after the October 1981 rally. Alongside liquidationism in relation to the party, we have liquidationism in relation to the method of the Transitional Programme. This again is a process which began in the latter years of the I**'s existence, and was most clear in the context of our work in WF.

I was for several years in the late 1970s in the SWP and for most of that time trying, unsuccessfully, to build a faction for the I**. During that time I had a number of meetings with comrades Hill and Carolan where it was made clear to me that the raising of transitional demands in the context of the day-to-day class struggle is an indispensable part of the activity of a revolutionary organisation. With the collaboration of comrade Hill I wrote an article for the IB (SWP's) about the need for Women's Voice to adopt a programme of transitional demands. The contents of this article were quite similar to the arguments of Workers' Power and the old W** at the second WF conference in Birmingham. I was therefore staggered and concerned when I realised that as a member of the I** I had to vote against arguments/positions

which I believed to be those of the I**. Again with the fusion of the I** and the new League, I anticipated a hardening up of the organisation around the question of the Transitional Programme, both in WF and the broad groups. The reality, of course, has been the reverse. Not only are transitional demands never raised in WF, but also they are no longer raised in the paper (except in small print in the Where We Stand column). Much of the pre-fusion discussion centred around the Transitional Programme, and amendments were made to the original broad groups 'programme' to meet the arguments of the old W**. Again, in hindsight, it is clear the ex-I** leadership agreed to this to facilitate fusion, not because they agreed with the politics upon which the amendments were based.

I therefore believe that liquidation of party and programme are the present politics of the majority of the W**. I do not believe that comrades Carolan, Kinnell and Hill, etc have consciously abandoned revolutionary Marxism - that would be a nonsense (of a sort, I am afraid, that the faction around comrade Smith often resort to). What I do believe is that comrade Carolan sees O. work as the basis of building a large organisation, and is prepared a la Tony Cliff to abandon programmatic principle for organisational gain. This I believe is why we have a change of line on Ireland. Surely comrade Carolan you must know in your heart of hearts that your more recent statements on Ireland have more in common with Cliff and Grant than with your own excellent articles in Workers F**** and Workers A***** (and from which many of us learnt). It is also the reason why the ex-I** leadership ps now prepared to force the remnants of the old W** out of the organisation - because they are now seen as an obstacle to O. work.

I have thought about joining the Smith/Jones faction, but I have decided not to as I believe the faction fight is no longer being waged at the level of politics, but at the level of personal insult and slurs and I have no wish to be part of such a faction fight, which in any case, I venture to predict, will be terminated later this year. However I am not leaving politics or deserting the class struggle. I refuse to accept any longer the discipline of the W**, but may be prepared to join whatever organisation comrade Smith and his faction join/form after they are kicked out of the W**.

Why has the Majority wound up our international work? - Cunliffe.

You may well have missed it. But as a result of a misleading resolution pushed through the November 19 National Committee meeting by the Carolan/Kinnell leadership, the Workers Socialist League is currently involved in no serious international work at all.

Few of our members find any opportunity or encouragement to investigate, discuss and develop analysis of international issues in the class struggle, the current crisis of the world Trotskyist movement, or develop the programme of our movement for the political reconstruction of the Fourth International. The structures within the League which should promote such work have been dissolved; the publications that should carry such material have been trivialised (SX) or wound up (Workers Socialist Review), or exist only as vague platitudes in NC resolutions (an "international bulletin" in English and French!) Little in the way of League resources is directed towards seriously building international solidarity work, which only survives at all through the tenacity and dedication of individual comrades. Our organisation is becoming mired ever deeper in the sludge of nationally-limited politics.

I believe that this is completely unacceptable for a Trotskyist organisation, and that sections of the NC and the membership have been cynically misled into endorsing this situation, some plainly believing that there is, somewhere and somehow, some degree of international work being carried out behind the scenes by the leadership. If this is the case, then it has been successfully concealed even from the Executive Committee.

The November 19 NC resolution, on the face of it, appeared to represent a commitment to some form of international work. But, as I pointed out at the time in voting against it, the whole proposal put forward by Kinnell was a sectarian recipe for the abandonment in practice of any serious effort towards the reconstruction of the FI. The resolution committed the NC to:

" Set up some sort of organised liaison between ourselves, the (American) PTT and (Australian) SF;

" Propose a joint international bulletin, to be produced by the WSL in English, French and German (and if possible other languages)...;

" Through written discussion and occasional international meetings, we attempt to develop joint documents with PTT and SF on major political questions. The three groups should also discuss the work of all of us on our home arenas;

" We seek contacts and dialogue with other forces, including those Trotskyist groups we already have some relations with;

" The international bulletin will be edited with a view to being a tool for intervention in relation to the USFI....;

" Prior to any approach to the USFI for fusion discussions, we should attempt to formulate a clear principled outline assessment of the USFI and its place in the world Trotskyist spectrum, in the WSL and jointly with the SF and the PTT;"

(See IB 77)

That there should be joint work and ongoing discussion between ourselves and the PTT (now WSL!) and SF was never and is not now in dispute. Nor is there any doubt that we should discuss much more on the politics of the USFI. The difference centres - since the demise of TILC last Spring - on the form of such work, its orientation, and its place in the context of a longer-term and wider perspective. Discussions between us, SF and WSL/USA is not a viable perspective for international work. Different attitudes on this question will produce a different assessment of the seriousness of Kinnell's proposals for bulletins, written discussions and international meetings.

Pulling Down the Shutters.

By the time of the November 19 NC we had already seen evidence of the actual attitude to international work of the Carolan/Kinnell leadership. They

have always seen this as the prerogative and business of a top-level elite within the League. From the time of fusion onwards the present Majority's determination to exclude the membership from significant participation in regular discussion and theoretical work on international questions was symptomised by their initial opposition to the old WSL's system of international commissions which had - with some success - carried out a level of educational, theoretical and practical work on various key issues and areas of international politics - for example on Turkey, the Middle East, South Africa, France and Latin America. Through the commissions, rank and file members of the League had been able to play an active role in developing our programme and the policies of the League. Now, with the commissions having long ago been stifled and killed off, there is no such avenue open.

We have seen the EC - which in the old WSL used to focus on political discussion, including international reports and a monitoring of our international work - virtually abandon any political discussion, and obviously abandon any up-to-date political reports or detailed analysis of international developments, all of which now play second fiddle to organisational wrangles and manoeuvres and the piecemeal approach of the Majority. But while the EC has been turned into a virtual "no-go" area for politics or objective discussion, the EC has of course been far worse for even longer. And comrades from the Majority, who scarcely troubled to conceal their pleasure at the collapse of TILC last year have made no effort whatever to open up any fresh international work or discussion.

In practice, by the time Kinnell moved his resolution on November 19 there was no regular, established forum even at leadership level where international (or national) political questions could be seriously discussed. There is not even an Editorial Board to discuss the content of the paper!

Predictably, the main casualties of the depoliticisation of the leading bodies of the League have been the "cinderella" areas of political work: work amongst the specially oppressed at home, and any work at all "abroad". International work requires time, effort and encouragement at leadership level if rank and file comrades are to be kept informed and drawn into participation. Instead of this, the League has seen the disappearance of any systematic educational programme which might equip newer and less confident comrades to deal independently with international questions.

An Empty Proposal.

Kinnell's resolution of Nov.19 boils down in essence to sporadic correspondence and occasional top-level get-togethers between leading WSL comrades and the leaders of two tiny organisations which both already to a greater or lesser extent accept the current politics of the WSL. Only a handful of people would be involved in this work at any stage, or even aware of the work between set-piece international meetings. The proposal for an international bulletin sounds very fine, until the practical questions are asked: who would write it? Would anyone be involved in discussing its contents? How would it be sold? To whom?

Given the constipated silence on international developments in the pages of SX since the New Year, it is open to some doubt what the "International Bulletin" might find to publish. Since it would be a party publication and not a notionally "broad" paper like SX, presumably only the Majority's views would get a look in. Maybe they would reprint some old ICL documents?

In any event, as the bulletin of a tiny, introspective and increasingly insignificant grouping with no serious orientation towards dialogue with the other segments of the world Trotskyist movement, such a bulletin would be hard-pressed to establish a definite purpose and direction. Why would anyone be bothered to read it, unless through idle curiosity?

There are still no answers to these questions, three months after Kinnell's resolution was carried by the EC, and no sign of any efforts to implement it.

There never were any answers in Kinnell's mind when he drafted the proposals. They were a cynical fraud from the start.

Since the NC majority was secured for that notion, international work (aside from a fleeting reference to the postponement of the December conference to April) has not even been listed on the EC agenda. There has been not the slightest move to commission articles and work that might make the notional "international bulletin" a reality.

Does this matter? I think it matters very much. There is an increasingly serious problem of political development of our comrades, all too few of whom have any opportunity to widen their political horizons beyond the day-to-day tussle in the British labour movement, and discuss the events of the international class struggle. Relatively few comrades are actively involved in practical international solidarity work. Our movement is sinking ever deeper into a national isolation, losing any feel for the world class struggle or the building of a world-wide, politically regenerated Trotskyist international.

This matters: internationalism, active, committed, principled, political internationalism is a lynchpin of Trotskyist politics.

The Majority's "Fundamentals"

You would not draw any such conclusion from Kinnell's document arguing the case for his proposals and against my counter-proposals (IB77). His text is entitled "Fundamentals First, Tactics Second". A quick reading suggests that maybe his exuberance got the better of him in the title; there are no political fundamentals to be found. One searches in vain for a programmatic point or a declaration of principle.

But this is to misunderstand Kinnell's approach, which is one of dyed-in-the-wool sectarianism towards the problems of reconstructing the Trotskyist International. For him the "fundamental" is not the need for an international, the need for serious internationalist commitment, or the need for deeper and wider programmatic discussion: Kinnell's "fundamental" is to preserve at any cost the USI's separation from the other currents and groupings which make up the majority of the present-day divided and confused "Trotskyist movement".

The political differences of programme and method which we have with the larger groupings are seen by Carolan/Kinnell not as political issues of importance to be clarified, confronted and if possible resolved in discussion, debate and the testing of theoretical positions in practical struggle: they are seen and used simply as convenient pegs on which to hang a sectarian banner of generalised denunciation and abstention from any serious programmatic or political contribution to the reconstruction of the FI. The unresolved problems of perspective and leadership for the working class, which lie at the centre of the crisis of post-war Trotskyism are for Carolan/Kinnell an occasion for comment rather than action.

This stance is sectarian, but not because I (or anyone else I know of in the USI) believe that the problem of reconstructing the FI can or should in any way be confined to attempts simply to rearrange or rearrange the component organisations of the existing world Trotskyist movement; nor because the USFI or the Morenist or Lambertist "internationals" in themselves contain vast potential layers of immediate recruits to our politics or massed proletarian forces (though they probably contain some of both). It is sectarian because Kinnell's view takes no account of the fight for the regeneration and reconstruction of the programme of Trotskyism and its international as a factor in the world class struggle, and the building of new leadership in the international working class.

The whole matter of programmatic and political debate is reduced by Kinnell/Carolan to the small change of polemics, juvenile abuse and name-calling, and tactical manoeuvres in relation to this or that rival existing current of the Trotskyist movement. By this method, the struggle for programmatic clarity and the reconstruction of the FI is reduced to a level of triviality where it appears possible - even desirable - to decide against getting involved.

International discussion, detached in this way from the practical struggles of the working class and the fight for new leadership, becomes simply one "option" to be taken up or not. And, in weighing up the situation, the only people to whom Carolan/Kinnell are prepared to make even the slightest favourable gestures are those who already largely agree with us.

In this way the WSL's sights have been lowered from the international class struggle to the cultivation of a meagre and secluded "mini-TILC" cabbage patch; and even this limited task is done with so little serious energy and commitment that the political tools are beginning to rust (some discarded altogether) - and weeds can be seen springing up around us and within our own organisation.

A Clock Without a Spring

By restricting WSL involvement in international work to a relationship with the groupings even more (though probably more internationalist) than ours, the Kinnell proposal in practice leaves the WSL to set the pace of discussion and development. But who will spur on the WSL and its Majority leadership? The internal driving mechanisms have been disengaged and destroyed with the dissolution of the international commissions and the depoliticisation of the leading committees. The events of the world class struggle plainly make little or no impact on the day-to-day training and activity of the Carolan/Kinnell leadership (as we can see from the paucity of thought in the SX international coverage since the New Year). The crisis of world Trotskyism with its impending and actual splits in the USFI, etc, are seen by the Majority as opportunities at most for sideline sloganising rather than any active intervention or political initiative. The Kinnell approach rests on no driving force that might see it implemented. It has already died in its tracks.

Dismal lesson of the 1953 International Committee.

There is a sad parallel to the present-day method of the WSL Majority. In 1953, the American SWP took the lead in (belatedly) attacking and publicly breaking from the opportunist political line of Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, then the leaders of the Fourth International. In November 1953, together with the British section (around Gerry Healy), the expelled French majority (including Lambert and Bleibtreu) and Nahuel Moreno in Argentina, the SWP published its Open Letter which spelled out four lines of principled opposition with Pablo, and in effect split the FI.

But in the period after 1953, the newly-formed International Committee abstained from the necessary political fight against Pablo at the Fourth World Congress, failed to look back and self-criticise the false positions which they had shared with Pablo at the 1951 World Congress, and failed to develop a coherent political alternative to Pablo's politics and method, which they denounced in the most sweeping and heavy terms they could find. The IC set up no functioning international leadership or democratic centralist structure, leaving the IC to function on the basis of unanimous consent, if at all.

The IC vegetated into an introspective stance, formally defending correct principles, but in the most ineffective way and ultimotistic terms. Having carried out a sudden, unexpected and unprepared break with the remainder of the FI - few of whom knew what was going on - the IC leaders made no efforts to pursue the discussion with the other sections. Partly as a result, the political principles that were defended in November 1953 were discarded by the SWP, the senior IC section, in the face of the Cuban revolution after 1959. By 1963, the SWP had merged again with Pablo, accepting a common method and programme. Healy, too, of course has since (though later) become the most 'Pabloite' of political leaders, while Lambert combines opportunism towards social democracy with sectarian politics.

Since 1953, not one of the main currents of the Trotskyist movement has been

willing to go back and rework the lessons of that major but politically inconclusive split. The result is that the world Trotskyist movement as a whole still has not learned those lessons. And its divisions today, the blind factional hostility whipped up by its various sectional leaderships, help obstruct any learning of lessons or development of programme. Every one of the main present-day leaderships has an interest in preserving the silence on these questions. And the first condition of the movement helps them to do so.

Yet now we see that Kinnell's approach is "fundamentally" to uphold and entrench those divisions, and add his two pennyworth to perpetuating them, not for the sake of clarity but purely and simply for the sectarian, factional petty interests of the present WSL Majority leadership.

Correct principles, false method.

Like a sick parody of the post-1953 IC, we have been locked by the Nov. 19 decision into an introspective, sectarian, politically xenophobic stance in which we defend a number of generally correct principles in the most wooden, lifeless and dogmatic fashion, ensuring before we start that we will make not the slightest impact, either on the existing organisations of the world Trotskyist movement, or on independent sections of militant workers on a world scale (who - after the dissolution of our public press and magazine, and with our coy refusal to push ourselves into any international debate - could only discover our existence through bizarre coincidence or some form of ESP).

If - as I believe, despite our disagreements, we do - we have something politically worthwhile to say and contribute to the programmatic reconstruction of the FI, then why are we not battering at the doors of its fragmented remnants today, demanding a hearing? Why are we wallowing in national isolation, developing no international work, no statements, no documents, no perspective? Why are we consoling ourselves with spurious proposals for "international work" which would - even if accomplished in full - be targeted at a world total of fifteen people in two groups, plus a few extra individuals, all of whom already largely agree with us, rather than seeking out wider audiences to convince of our politics? What would be said of a League member who advocated any comparably narrow and sectarian stance for our politics in Britain?

We can only draw the conclusion that the Majority leadership which on November 19 persuaded IC members to subscribe to their blank cheque for this attitude, has succumbed to the same type of dogmatic, self-righteous, nervously superficial and indifferent stance towards international work which derailed the early International Committee

The case for an initiative

My proposal to remedy this tendency towards liquidation of international work was set out in a brief text submitted to the November 19 IC (reprinted in 1977). In my view, a concerted international initiative towards political discussion with the USFI, raising as the tangible focus for such discussions the possibility - if a political and organisational basis could be found - of eventual fusion would be useful for three reasons:

(1) It would provide a much-needed stimulus to do some of the things in terms of League education, political analysis and internal clarification, which have until now been piously agreed but never carried out. It would give a useful framework in which to carry out an objective analysis of the politics and development of the USFI. It would force us to set in motion sufficient background work for us to be able to assess and criticise the USFI sections' work in countries other than Britain: this work could and should draw in comrades not presently involved in any theoretical or international work.

(2) It would put the WSL back on to the international map - where, before fusion, we were a well-known landmark - and reestablish our determination

to fight for our politics and demand an open discussion.

(3) In doing so it would put us on the offensive and the USFI leaders onto the defensive. Instead of being occasional, passive, frightened victims of IMG-style "unity" campaigns in which they held the initiative, we could turn the tables and move onto the political attack. Our standing would be improved in Britain and internationally, and our strengths could be utilised to advantage.

Kinnell's response: Create fresh confusion.

Kinnell in IB77 dismisses my proposal with a combination of wilfully obtuse and misleading arguments. His main points are:

(a) The WSL is in bad shape. There are people who disagree with the Majority, and among them are a wide range of people who might vote for a more active and flexible approach to international work for different motives. Because of this, nothing should be done until the WSL has been "clarified".

But Kinnell's plan lacks any motor force that might propel any process of "clarification". Even if we were to grant that Kinnell is right in adopting his stance of unreserved and almost fratricidal hostility to the rest of the world Trotskyist movement, it is unlikely that he will swing many to his point of view in the absence of more information on the politics of the various currents and experience of seeking to discuss with them. Experience of Kinnell's brazen distortion of the views of minority comrades within the WSL lend little credence to his paraphrases and summaries of the politics of other tendencies. Indeed, it seems that the only way the WSL's decks could be cleared of the "confusion" which alarms Kinnell is through wholesale expulsions - in which case the ramp grouping would presumably face no pressure to discuss with the USFI, or anyone else!

In my view the whole allegation of political "confusion" amongst Kinnell's opponents is a deliberate red herring. He is not alarmed by the evident confusion amongst the IC majority which backed his motion, some of whom plainly believe that international work will be done, while others would be quite happy to see it dropped altogether. The fact is that there is bound to be a large measure of ignorance, confusion and frustration in the WSL at the present time. The answer is surely to mobilise the movement in political initiatives which combat those weaknesses, not dig in on the politics which helped create them.

(b) Far from focussing on "fundamentals", Kinnell deliberately misrepresents my proposal, so that he can go on to raise organisational objections to "immediate fusion" with the British and Australian USFI groups (not in the USA). It is a bitter irony that only a week or so after that IC discussion we heard that the Australian Castroite grouping had proposed fusion to the SF comrades, whose response, endorsed by Kinnell, bore no relation to Kinnell's blazing hostility in IB77.

Kinnell knows perfectly well that my proposal has never been for fusion with the British USFI section (SL/SA supporters) but that we should raise the possibility of our entry to the USFI as a separate British sympathising section. But never mind the facts: Kinnell's attitude is coloured by an evident morbid fear of fighting for our politics in anything other than the most remote and gladiatorial fashion. I do not share his pessimism about our prospects in such discussions. Strangely enough I feel that the WSL is politically stronger than Kinnell thinks.

The brazen arrogance of Kinnell's position on the American comrades, however, has to be seen to be believed. On the basis of a crass and almost complete ignorance of the actual situation in the USA, he proposes in his document (and Carolan proposed as a motion to the IC) that we should advise the PTT/WSL to wind up their organisation, and enter the new pro-Mandel Socialist Action grouping as individuals. The reality is that within Socialist Action (which describes itself as a "public faction" of the SNP) there

is no internal democracy, no political debate, and a prohibition on any international affiliation other than to the USFI. What would have been said if I had suggested that we wind up the WSL and enter the USFI as individuals on such terms?

Why does Kinnell find it so much easier to accept or propose flexible and non-imperialist initiatives (against hopeless odds) for OTHER people, thousands of miles away, than to accept a much lesser degree of flexibility and imagination for the WSL here at home? Isn't this a clear symptom of national Trotskyism, a dual standard which is poison in an international grouping?

Silly Polemics

(c) Kinnell's third line of argument consists of a series of very silly polemics against the minority Faction (of which I am not a member), whose position is quite ludicrously described on occasions as "explicitly" in "solidarity with the USFI against the EC Majority".

What is the basis for this extravagant claim? That on two occasions - during the Korean airliner affair and the Grenada invasion - Cde Smith voiced criticisms of the SX lead or editorial articles, comparing them unfavourably with the equivalent Socialist Action?

This could scarcely, even by the wildest stretch of the imagination, be described as "explicit solidarity with the USFI". It means, in fact, that there were disagreements within our EC over the handling of these two issues of world politics. In the course of those disagreements, Smith voiced the opinion that Socialist Action articles were closer to the mark than those in SX. At least in the case of the Korean jet, this view was born out as fact by the subsequent revelations, which demonstrated beyond doubt that the onus of responsibility should fall squarely on the USA, exposed the falsifications involved in Reagan's cynical allegations, underlined the defensive character of the Soviet military response to a probable espionage flight over vital installations during crucial tests. SA's response had leaned heavily - if uncritically - towards the "defence of the USSR" (which Kinnell now seems increasingly keen to repudiate altogether), whereas SX, in a hasty and cobbled Editorial, based on inadequate information, underplayed the necessary exposure of Reagan. To point this out does not mean to "solidarise with the USFI" against Kinnell and Carolan; it is to try to learn from experience and keep our press reporting in line with reality.

Kinnell however, throws the net wider, and makes the cynical, sweeping and grossly misleading allegation that the Faction leaders "solidarise" with the "USFI" not simply on such minor issues, but "on precisely the basic questions of world politics which underly our day-to-day differences with the USFI - Stalinism, 'camp' politics versus class politics, petty bourgeois anti-imperialism." Obviously the very labels which Kinnell uses to describe these differences are fractionally loaded to the extent of obscuring the point at issue. The main disagreement I know of in relation to 'camp' politics in the WSL is the Majority Faction's stubborn insistence in using the term to describe the politics of the minority, resting on the flimsy "evidence" of a repudiated sentence in a single ID article during the Kalvinas debate 18 months ago (ID7). Where has the Faction, or anyone else, advocated "petty bourgeois anti-imperialism?"

Never mind the facts: Kinnell's case rests on assertion rather than reality. He knows full well that irrespective of the existence of the USFI the questions to which he refers so dishonestly have emerged as substantial and legitimate differences in the post-fusion WSL. He also knows that if he and Carolan, (unlisting the misguided cooperation of cde Smith from the old WSL,) had not been so keen to push through a hasty fusion and paper over the programmatic cracks in 1981, such questions could and should have been discussed prior to fusion. In expressing disagreement with Kinnell/Carolan,

the Faction and other minority voices are expressing no agreement at all with the politics of the USFI; they are defending and standing for their own political point of view. The issues alluded to by Kinnell need to be clarified within the WSL: his slanders, scaremongering and sectarianism do nothing to clarify, but use them simply as a factional club against the minority.

In similar fashion Kinnell angrily turns on those who find some of the Majority's politics to be "cranky". Perhaps this word as a description of some of the more exotic creations of the Kinnell/Carolan school of Trotskyism is not the most precise Marxist term available. But to use it does not state or imply any corresponding sympathy with the politics of the USFI or anyone else. What Kinnell will not concede is that many of us come from our own distinct political tradition. We don't need or take the USFI as a reference point, any more than we are obliged to start out from some of the weird and not-so-wonderful concepts of Carolan's "orthodoxy" which many of us discovered only after the 1981 fusion (which, by the way, would never have occurred had the old WSL been susceptible to "Trotskyist public opinion").

Finally Kinnell draws the conclusion that the very existence of the Faction would represent "a serious inner weakness for us if we were to attempt a closer orientation to the USFI" (p5). This scurrilous allegation could lead logically to the conclusion that the Faction are simply agents of the USFI; from there the next step is expulsions.

The Issues at Stake.

Political arthritis at home and rigor mortis in our international work are strangling the political development of the WSL and its membership. Kinnell's text is both a symptom of the disease and an indication of its source; but it offers no cures. Indeed, a mystifying final paragraph virtually revels in the current dire situation, making ludicrously complacent claims intermingled with spurious allegations:

"Despite everything, we are doing pretty good work in the class struggle. Despite the pettifogging cries and chants of the two (!) dead-end factions (Oxford and Coventry), the majority of the League is educating and clarifying itself." (ID77, "Fundamentals", p6)

Remember that, comrades. Kinnell says you are educating and clarifying yourselves. Who does he mean? Who is being educated by the present leadership? Who is clear on the perspectives of the League at home or internationally?

Failing to recognise or acknowledge the problem, slamming the door on any possible solutions, and then whistling loudly in the dark will not improve matters. The collapse into national isolationism must be consciously understood and consciously fought by concrete steps to ensure that international work, political education on the history and crisis of the FI, and programmatic discussion are brought right to the centre of political life in the WSL.

My proposal for an initiative towards the USFI was motivated on the basis that it would combine all of these moves in one bold, tactical step. The WSL should take and be seen to take a decisive move towards international debate and dialogue which would be potentially beneficial in itself; would take seriously the task of developing a more detailed understanding and critique of the politics of the USFI and a corresponding deepening and broadening of our own programme and perspective; and it would give the much needed external stimulus to and reference point for our joint work with the American and Australian comrades.

What do we have to lose from such an exercise? Does Kinnell seriously believe that our membership are so weak politically that they will be seduced away by the siren calls of the USFI - when almost every one of our members joined the League or its forerunners in opposition to the IHG/SL, and finds her/his self at loggerheads time and again with SL/SA supporters in the labour movement? Does he believe that a real debate on politics would work simply to the detriment of his views - while convincing noone on the other side? Does he feel that USFI politics are in this way somehow stronger than those of the present-day WSL?

If he does, then maybe it is he, rather than me, who is excessively swayed by "Trotskyist public opinion". I don't share his pessimism and defeatist approach. If Kinnell does not hold these views, then what is he afraid of?

A key factor in shaping our attitude to international work has to be the development of our own cadre and the expansion of our contacts and our impact on a world scale. To win a hearing from the best elements in the world Trotskyist movement and the most developed working class militants who may not be organised behind any of the banners of present-day "Trotskyism", we must be seen to adopt a resolute and outward-going fight for our programme and principles on a world scale. We will gain no respect and no significant forces, and learn no lessons by covering away in a Kings Cross closet, denouncing and blowing raspberries at the world at large and waiting for the world movement to seek out our address.

The same method of approach, the same political seriousness which should make us resistant to the pressures towards a precipitate and pointless split in today's polarised WSL should impel us also to seek ways and means to argue out our programme and perspective with other segments of the divided world Trotskyist movement. We are all casualties of the political plagues of opportunism and sectarianism which have wrecked such havoc on the post-war Fourth International.

Unfortunately Kinnell and Carolan seem profoundly allergic to such a serious political method: they look without dismay upon the worsening crisis in the WSL, and rejoice in the division and disarray of the world Trotskyist movement. They lift not a finger to halt the slide towards a senseless split at home: why should we expect them to be any less destructively factional and sectarian in relation to international work?

It is to be hoped that the membership of the WSL will prove itself less easily misled on this and other questions than the Majority on the NC, some of whom should certainly have known better.

Branches and areas can and must take up the question of international work and basic education in various ways between now and the necessary reversal of the NC's Nov.19 policy. An outline guide to some of the key issues in need of serious discussion and theoretical work appears in my redrafted document "The Crisis of the FI and Our Tasks" (IB61, July 1985). We should also republish as an IB the TILC programmatic document The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle, which would offer a tangible focus for discussion on programme, possibly in conjunction with branch/area classes and schools on the history and programme of the FI.

Such discussion will in my view underline the need to use the Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle, and the method embodied in both documents, as the basis for a serious international initiative towards discussion, in which every member of the WSL can and must be involved.

Cunliffe. Feb 28, 1984.

IMPERIALISM AND OUR PROGRAMME IN THE 1980s

A reply to Kinnell's IB49 . Part 1 - Where Kinnell goes wrong. Cunliffe .

What do we expect of a document setting out to present up-to-date facts, figures and analysis of modern-day imperialism? Particularly if the article is attempting - as does IB49 - to argue that the situation is fundamentally changed from the general lines of analysis laid down by Lenin and Trotsky, we should be looking for a number of key questions to be answered.

Firstly we would want an objective appraisal of the actual form of oppression and exploitation of the working classes of the "Third World", "Less Developed Capitalist" countries (LDCs) by the ruling classes of the imperialist countries. To present this a number of topics must be addressed, including:

- the level of foreign debts, together with the growing interest burden on the LDCs, which are probably the best known and most obvious overt symptom of their crisis and the extent to which their economies are "milked" by the imperialist bourgeoisie.

- a serious examination of the role of the multinationals is the central component of the economies under examination, to show the extent to which the economy is controlled, dominated or actually owned by imperialist-based capital.

- a detailed analysis of the political leverage and blackmail applied to LDC ruling classes and military cliques by the imperialist ruling classes through the mechanism of the IMF, the World Bank and commercial bank lending policies.

- analysis of the generally repressive political regimes in the LDCs: how they relate both to imperialism and to the level and type of development of capitalism in the LDCs.

In addition to this, a serious attempt to convince us of a soundly based new theory of imperialism should offer a critical analysis of global economic figures served up by a variety of sources. It should present a complete and objective analysis of Lenin's 'Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism', and show why in the author's view its starting points are no longer relevant, while tracing what, if any, are the factors which remain valid. And it should inform the reader at its conclusion what are the practical consequences of the new theory for the programme and day-to-day work of the revolutionary movement. (One might add that any such analysis which was taken seriously should be coupled with equally serious efforts to promote international discussion within the Trotskyist movement: but this aspect flows over into a discussion on the WSL NC majority's current shameful abandonment of international work, which will not be pursued in this text).

Unfortunately for Kinnell, his document in IB49, purportedly designed to prove to those of us reluctant to swallow his and Carolan's notions of imperialism, and to reassure us that "there is firm ground on the other side" (article in IB77, p.1), satisfies none of these basic prerequisites. Bulging at the seams with bits and pieces of figures and facts, it does not come to grips at all with the present-day realities of imperialist exploitation. Its basic method of approach runs completely contrary to the necessary concreteness, objectivity and honesty. Rather than move point by point through a reply to all 49 pages (plus the supplementary 14 pages in IB77) I will set out as briefly as I can why Kinnell's method is unacceptable, before moving on to set out an alternative analysis of imperialism which I consider more in line with reality.

Abstractions

Lenin spelled out that the essence of dialectical analysis was "the splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts" (Vol.38, p.359). (We apply this apparently complex approach every day when we take good care to distinguish between the leadership of the labour movement and its rank and file, between the ruling bureaucracy in the Stalinist states and the working class. Without such an approach, the presentation of facts can multiply rather than resolve confusion.)

Kinnell, however, repeatedly presents us simply with figures and facts that amount to global abstractions. Apparently seeking to refute some (imagined) opponent who might argue that there has been no industrial development in the LDCs, he fails to present anything like an adequate breakdown of the political conditions under which industrial development has taken place both on the international and national level. Eager above all to prove that a growing number of LDCs are no longer oppressed and exploited by imperialism but "independent", even "sub-imperialist" capitalist countries analogous to European imperialist powers in previous stages of development, he fails to ask and answer obvious questions, and presents us time and again with undifferentiated abstractions such as "Mexico", "Brazil" and of course "Argentina".

On p.2 of IB49, for example, we are told of the "narrowing gap" between the "national income" of the USA and Mexico. But this is separated from any serious examination of the extent to which investment and loan income from Mexico helps further enrich the American bourgeoisie. And we are glibly told that "Mexico" is "pretty much on a level with, if anything slightly better off than, the poorest West European country - Portugal". This tells us little or nothing about the realities of life for the Mexican and Portuguese workers, or the relationship of Mexico to imperialism.

Similarly on page 3, we are told, in bland abstraction, that "Latin America (!) now is at a level of capitalist development roughly comparable to Western Europe in the first half of this century". As a footnoted afterthought, Kinnell admits that "this does not mean that Latin America is at the same point on the same path of capitalist development as Western Europe in the early 20th century. It is a different point on a different path."

Indeed the differences so far exceed the similarities that the comparison can only confuse. At the turn of the century, Western Europe held colonies, and an overwhelming advantage as the starting place of industrialisation. Today, too, Western Europe, North America and Japan are firmly ensconced as the seats of finance capital, modern technology and mass producing multinational manufacturing giants, posing far more developed and intense global competition to emergent capitalist concerns in Latin America, Africa or Asia than was ever faced by Western Europe. The value of trying to compare levels of development on such an a-historical basis is highly questionable.

With similar bland abstraction, Kinnell tells us (IB49, p.5) that "a few LDCs have become sizable manufacturing centres and have begun to export manufactured goods on a large scale". Once again this leaves open the question of who owns the manufacturing concerns, who profits from the exports, and the deformations which these developments have brought about in economies such as Brazil. On page 6 we are told that "LDCs' share of the manufactured imports of the ACCs went up from 7% in 1970 to 13% in 1980". But since we are told elsewhere that up to 38% (or more) of world trade is in fact exchanges between multinationals, and we know that imperialist-based multinationals have in many cases deliberately switched manufacturing operations to low wage, low tax, repressive LDCs, such global figures do very little to enlighten us on the relations between imperialism and LDC economies.

As Bob Sutcliffe pointed out in the anthology on Imperialism which he co-edited in the early 1970s:

"Since a large proportion of world trade and international investment is between branches of these (multinational) firms, measures of dependence which emphasise trade or capital movements between countries will fail to understand the full meaning of this change in the structure of world capitalism". (Studies in the Theory of Imperialism, p.328).

Kinnell tells us on page 9 that "Brazil is now a bigger steel producer than Britain", and presents a list of shares in world steel output. Yet again he fails to show the link between Brazil's newly increased steel output and the direct investment of multinational manufacturers, for whom state-subsidised steel supplies are a cheap input. His analysis glosses over the fact that 55% of steel production in 1980 took place in the imperialist countries, with a further 34% in the Stalinist-ruled states, and 1.1% in Australia, leaving less than 10% in total produced in the remainder of Asia, Africa (including South Africa) and Latin America. Plainly in comparison to no steel production at all, the "rate of growth" is significant - or, in the case of some countries, startling. But there is little sign here that in independent economic development these countries - comprising a vast proportion of the world's population - are to any significant extent "narrowing the gap" with imperialism. In the early days of capitalism, cotton textile manufacture was the staple of British industry: as the system has developed, this has become a hallmark of the more backward, peripheral economies, and fallen away in the imperialist centres.

To assemble a world view which emphasises (IB49, p.14) the opinion that "finance capital is now relatively well developed in some LDCs", and claims (without evidence) that "large amounts of Argentine capital are said to have been exported" while failing to look at the role of foreign-based subsidiaries of multinationals and Western/Japanese banks in such developments is plainly one-sided. To present a section on this which is equally as long as a cryptic and undeveloped section on "debt" (IB49, p.15) is bizarre. Far from their major role being as exporters of capital, the bourgeoisie, their state apparatus and the multinational firms and subsidiaries in Brazil are exporters of raw materials and manufactured commodities, and simultaneously vast borrowers of capital from the imperialist banking centres, and payers of interest. This issue is central to any grasp of the actual economic relations between the LDCs and imperialism. Yet Kinnell leaves us simply with an enigmatic sentence admitting the "more central" role of the IMF as "arbiter of the banks' debt rescheduling".

Significantly, Kinnell also omits any figures to show the rates of interest payable, which intensify the burden of debt repayments relative to the export earnings of the LDCs, the make-up of the borrowing that has taken place, or the consequences of debt rescheduling operations in added costs and imposed economic and political policies.

Moving from the "facts and figures" section to Kinnell's own analysis, we find him again asserting in abstract terms that "most third world countries have begun to develop their own manufacturing industry, some have done a great deal more than begin". Once again the resort to abstraction helps emphasise Kinnell's view that Mexico, Brazil and Argentina in particular are "sub-imperialist" regimes more or less on a par with any bourgeois or imperialist governments in Europe or North America. Hence we find again on page 35 an abstract reference to "large-scale industrial capitalism in the LDCs", as part of a "new era of capitalist development", which in Kinnell's view supercedes Lenin's basic lines of approach in "Imperialism".

Omissions

The abstractions which are so characteristic of Kinnell's presentation are amplified by some strategic omissions. In particular he steers well clear of any detailed assessment of the pattern of indebtedness and the post-war role of the IMF and the World Bank as custodians of imperialist economic interests in the LDCs. In this way he avoids key elements of exploitation

of the masses of the LDCs by the imperialist bankers, through the medium of pliable, reactionary, "politically independent" regimes. And he also avoids any reckoning with the extent to which the imperialists, by their economic domination, are able to impose political decisions on "independent" regimes, and even force through changes in regimes (as in Chile) which displease the imperialist politicians and business chiefs.

Kinnell's other main omission is equally telling. Despite repeatedly assuring us of the importance of the theoretical world view which he is advocating for ensuring the political independence of the working class, he fails to offer up any programme for revolution in the LDCs based on his analysis. Indeed he casts considerable doubts over some very basic questions. Where does he stand, for example, on the slogan for the repudiation of foreign debts as part of the revolutionary programme in Latin America or other LDCs? In IB49 we find the issue is ignored altogether; in IB77 we are offered only ambiguous statements.

"...often leftists put the fight against the IMF on a nationalist footing ... Repudiation of a foreign debt by a bourgeois government - which is not inconceivable - would not ensure economic 'sovereignty', but thrust Argentina into economic isolationism."

Kinnell's main argument throughout the two documents IB49 and IB77 is against "economic isolationism": he does nothing to explain how repudiation of foreign debts under a workers' government would not be equally isolationist. It is by no means clear why he should on the one hand quote approvingly the Workers Party (PT) of Brazil's slogan: "If the Brazilian bourgeoisie wants to make a deal with the IMF, then let them pay for it themselves. The workers won't pay!" and yet on the other, castigate Moreno's MAS in Argentina for raising the demand of repudiation of foreign debts as diverting workers "from the necessary internationalist outlook". (Strikingly, Kinnell offers us no context for the phrases he extracts from the Morenist policy - giving the fake impression that the Morenists deliberately focus their demand solely on a bourgeois government.)

To slam others for their inadequate programme while offering none yourself is a cheap and largely uninspiring form of polemic - in which Kinnell and Carolan specialise. It is a method which does nothing to enlighten the world movement or develop the theoretical base of the League.

Falsifications

Is it by accident or by design that Kinnell avoids giving any full description of Lenin's main points in Imperialism? He interprets Lenin's conclusions in the most narrow way imaginable, with the resultant effect of emphasising the extent to which 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism' is outdated, and minimising the elements which remain valid as a framework for understanding imperialism today.

Lenin himself insisted that the "briefest possible definition of imperialism" would have to be that:

"Imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a definition would include what is most important."

Strikingly, Kinnell fails to do more than fleetingly refer to this "most important" factor.

Is the age of monopoly capitalism transcended? This can scarcely be argued in the light of the enormous concentration of wealth and productive power in a handful of vast multinational firms and imperialist banks. The power of these monopolies is in no way less than the power of the much less developed capitalist centres of power when Lenin wrote. So why is it that Kinnell focusses his critique of Lenin on less important factors?

In a more extended summary, Lenin declared that "We must give a definition of imperialism that will include the following five of its basic features:

"-1) The concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life.

"-2) The merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this "finance capital", of a financial oligarchy.

"-3) The export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance.

"-4) The formation of international monopolist capitalist combines which share the world among themselves, and

"-5) The territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed."

With the exception of point 5, which relates specifically to colonialism and has clearly been transformed by subsequent developments, what is striking about Lenin's definition is not how antiquated, but how modern it sounds nearly 70 years later.

1) Monopolies - often multinationals - have plainly continued to grow and to play an ever-more decisive role in economic life at a national and multinational level. There are about 10,000 multinationals, operating over 80,000 subsidiaries and affiliates. The four largest have an annual turnover greater than the total GNP of all Africa. Monopoly is still very much alive and kicking the world's working classes.

2) While we could debate the precise extent of the fusion of interests between industrial and banking capital (which particularly in times of crisis appear more sharply counterposed), few would dispute that at the top of each structure there is a great interchange and criss-crossing of personnel and other links: the existence at the head of the massive banking and broking empires of a financial oligarchy which decides the fate of tens of millions cannot be seriously doubted.

3) Likewise, the "export of capital" may pose some of the problems of theoretical explanation raised by Kinnell in his text: but its existence as a basic component of modern-day imperialist capitalism - a major factor in development since World War 2 - is beyond question. The only doubt is whether the bourgeois and military regies of the LDCs can satisfy the captains of multinational industry and the bankers of Wall Street, Tokyo and London that adequate profits, interest and principal repayments on their exported capital will be forthcoming at the expense of the working masses.

4) Finally, the formation and operation of international monopolist capitalist combines has continued in the period after Lenin. They still draw vast and easy pickings from their carving up of the world.

The new factor, which must be developed in our analysis, is the construction of these elements of monopoly capitalism after the formal political independence of the large majority of colonies has been achieved. Lenin however was not blind to such developments, even in Imperialism.

"Finance capital is such a great, it may be said such a decisive, force in all economic and in all international relations, that it is capable of subjecting, and actually does subject to itself even states enjoying the fullest political independence..." (p.97).

He points out of course (writing at the high point of colonialism) that this is only a "middle stage" for finance capital, which (at that stage) preferred to ensure the "loss of political independence of the subjected

peoples and countries." And he argues (p.98) that "Colonial possession alone gives the monopolies complete guarantee against all contingencies in the struggle with competitors." But the monopolies have had to learn to live with these contingencies and risks in order to continue their exploitation of the masses of the "independent" Third World. Lenin himself pointed out:

"Typical of this epoch is not only the two main groups of countries: those owning colonies, and colonies, but also the diverse forms of dependent countries which, officially, are politically independent, but in fact are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence." (p.101).

In the post-war period, we have seen a readjustment of the relative numbers in each group, and would need to refine our description of the imperialist powers to take account of the role of the USA - which never really held any significant colonies. A more modern definition would need to focus even more than did Lenin on their possession of a monopoly or controlling interest in imperialist finance capital and multinational corporations.

Nor was Lenin unable to see that a consequence of the global development of imperialism would include the development of capitalism in countries outside the metropolises:

"The export of capital affects and greatly accelerates the development of capitalism in those countries to which it is exported. While, therefore, the export of capital may tend to a certain extent to arrest development in the capital-exporting countries, it can only do so by expanding and deepening the further development of capitalism throughout the world." (p.76)

And Lenin's analysis was also broad enough in its terms of reference to take account of changes in relative influence of the imperialist powers.

"Half a century ago, Germany was a miserable, insignificant country, as far as her capitalist strength was concerned, compared with the strength of England at that time; Japan was the same compared with Russia. Is it 'conceivable' that in ten or twenty years' time the relative strength of the imperialist powers will have remained unchanged? Absolutely inconceivable." (p.144)

By one-sidedly viewing Lenin's "Imperialism" as an explanation of colonialism, and by incessantly reminding us that most of the colonies have now achieved political independence, Kinnell undermines the strength of Lenin's analysis and falsely separates the economic and political aspects of imperialism. Any such separation is strongly attacked by Lenin, who castigates Kautsky for the fact that he "detaches the politics of imperialism from its economics" (p.110) and "one-sidedly, i.e. arbitrarily, singles out only the national question (although the latter is extremely important in itself as well as in its relation to imperialism)" (p.108). Lenin's analysis, indeed dwells explicitly and almost exclusively upon the economics of imperialism, while the Comintern Theses tended to dwell almost exclusively on the political aspect.

Lenin pointed out in Imperialism: "We shall not be able to deal with non-economic aspects of the question, however much they deserve to be dealt with" (p.12).

By himself falsely separating the politics and economics of Imperialism, Kinnell too is able to exaggerate the extent to which Lenin's work is obsolete, focus "onesidedly, i.e. arbitrarily" upon the national question, and clear the decks for his own analysis of the formal equality of politically independent ex-colonial countries and the imperialist powers. It enables him to belittle the continuity of exploitation of the colonial masses by the imperialist bourgeoisie with the connivance of the bourgeois and military regimes of the Third World.

But there is another falsification which is equally worthy of note, because it also colours the world view of Kinnell/Carolan, Casey, and those among the majority who have more or less explicitly (see SX or RNL) renounced the slogan of defence of the Soviet Union. Kinnell, attempting to enlist Trotsky to back up his own view that the Soviet bureaucracy is expansionist and "imperialist", singles out and underlines a passage from Trotsky's In Defence of Marxism, making no attempt whatever to put the reference in any historical context.

Kinnell's chosen passage, taken from Trotsky's article "Again and Once More Again on the Nature of the USSR", begins as follows:

"Can the present expansion of the Kremlin be termed imperialism?"

Kinnell fails to tell us that the "present expansion" referred to was Stalin's invasion of Eastern Poland in September 1939, a few days before the article was written. Trotsky was not writing about any general policy of expansion by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which would have merited more than this passing reference, but a specific, concrete instance.

Trotsky continues: "First of all, we must establish what social content is included in this term. History has known the 'imperialism' of the Roman state based on slave labour, the imperialism of feudal land-ownership, the imperialism of the Tsarist monarchy etc. The driving force behind the Moscow bureaucracy is indubitably the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues. This is the element of 'imperialism' in the widest sense of the word which was a property in the past of all monarchies, oligarchies, ruling estates, mediaeval estates and classes..." (Kinnell's emphasis).

The driving force behind the invasion of Poland was the Moscow bureaucrats' efforts to extend their power and prestige: but Kinnell would need to produce a lot more than this, were he to convince us that Trotsky's global assessment of Stalinism had shifted from his assessment of it as a national, conservative, counter-revolutionary bureaucracy intent upon collaboration with imperialism, to an all-round expansionist, aggressive, "imperialist" force.

Having thus falsified Trotsky, Kinnell goes on to suggest that the expansion of Stalinist control during the cold war in post-war Eastern Europe was "proof of its rapacity in striving to 'expand its power, its prestige, its revenues'." (IB49, p.23). Such an analysis flies in the face of the known attempts by Stalin to consolidate bourgeois coalition governments in the 'buffer zone' countries at a time of utter military and economic prostration of the Western imperialist countries, and his subsequent willing surrender of Austria and Finland back to the imperialist fold. It ignores Stalin's conscious sabotage of the Greek revolutionary civil war and the revolutionary opportunity offered in post war France and Italy; ignores Stalin's treachery in Vietnam, and the Soviet Union's refusal to commit itself to the liberation of Korea: in any one of these instances a truly "expansionist", "imperialist" bureaucracy could and might have been expected to use its military strength and political advantage to extend its power, prestige and revenues. Yet this did not occur. The eventual Stalinisation of Eastern Europe which did occur took place either in defiance of Stalin's general approach (Yugoslavia) or as a defensive bureaucratic military response by the Kremlin to the imperialist Cold War.

Kinnell's wilful distortion of Trotsky and one-sided approach to post-war history are part of a world view which increasingly differs only in superficial terminology from the theory of state capitalism, and which is more and more emerging as an abandonment of our supposedly common programmatic positions. One obvious example is the abject failure of anyone from the Majority Faction to take up a defence of the group's policy of opposing unilateral nuclear disarmament of the USSR against the strident Lord Chalfont-like attacks in the paper by Stan Crooke, At the time of

fusion we were told that this was a position shared by the two groups: have Kinnell/Carolan and the "Majority" now changed their minds?

Empiricism

Another characteristic of Kinnell's text in IB49 is the way in which his selected facts and figures are carefully detached from any coherent account of their historical development. This makes easier the resort to abstractions such as "Brazil", "Mexico" etc, and the exaggeration of the extent to which the LDCs have experienced an "independent" process of development. The IMF is mentioned only in passing, with no account given of its origins, guiding principles or record of intervention in the LDCs.

Even the questions of "political independence" which Kinnell believes has so fundamentally changed the world since Lenin are not probed in any depth or historical fashion. There is barely even a mention of the savage dictatorial regimes which so heavily dominate the LDCs, the fate of "democratic" reformist or nationalist experiments sabotaged by imperialism, or the current squeeze being applied even to authoritarian regimes like that in Brazil.

Arrogance

To compound these problems - any of which might legitimately throw doubt on Kinnell's document and its conclusions - we find a tone adopted of almost insufferable arrogance and contempt towards the oppression and exploitation of the masses of the Third World.

"To replace (!) the demand for a concrete analysis by a crude classification of capitalist countries into two groups - 'oppressed' and 'oppressor', or whatever else we want to call them - and the rule that we must always side with the national struggles of the oppressed group, is to negate the spirit of Lenin's argument. It means losing political independence in relation to the bourgeoisies of the countries which - by whatever index: size of debts, average income, telephones per head, or any other figure dragged in to suit the argument - win classification as oppressed" (p.37).

It is hard to imagine such an attitude on the left anywhere other than an imperialist country, or being written by anyone other than a white male comrade. The idea that the masses of the Third World "win" classification as oppressed; the idea that no economic index is relevant to determine whether or not a nation is oppressed and exploited by imperialism; the idea that imperialism has changed to the extent that 'oppressed' and 'oppressor' have no value as categories; and the contemptible sleight of hand argument suggesting that anyone recognising such distinctions must necessarily be an advocate of popular frontism and class collaboration, are all reflections of an arrogant, dismissive, nationally isolated attitude. To masquerade as a defender of Leninist principles while brandishing such politics is the very height of hypocrisy. To set out as an internationalist without grasping the fact that you are living and working politically in an imperialist, oppressor nation - and to devote such conscious effort to belittling this fact and denying its significance is a peculiar and lamentable hallmark of Kinnell's approach.

This is the first section of a longer document which will be shortly appearing in a subsequent internal bulletin .

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