

.....
INTERNAL BULLETIN NO.116

JUNE 1984
.....

CONFERENCE DOCUMENTS

AGENDA

NC recommended agenda is as below. For resolution from the DCF, see this IB.

APPEAL BY THE OXFORD FACTION

BALANCE-SHEET OF THE FUSION & WSL ORGANISATION

'Defend the Unity of the League! Democratise the WSL!', IB 92, moved by the DCF

'Building the WSL', IB 107, moved by Carolan and Kinnell

Amendments to 'Building the WSL', in this IB, moved by Kinnell

'Organisation Report', draft in this IB, by Kinnell

Resolution on Finance, in this IB, by Entwistle

THE MINERS' STRIKE: RESOLUTION in paper no. 173, moved by outgoing EC.
PERSPECTIVES AND TASKS

'Some immediate tasks', IB 86, moved by the outgoing NC

'British perspectives', IB 74, moved by Quelch

Resolution on our work, in this IB, moved by McInnis

'A Question of Strategy', IB 114, moved by McInnis*

AFGHANISTAN

'For the withdrawal of USSR troops', in this IB, moved by Carolan for the EC.

SOUTH ATLANTIC WAR & OUR PROGRAMME AGAINST IMPERIALISM

September 1982 resolutions, in WSR 2 supplement

INTERNATIONAL REPORT

'International report', draft in this IB, by Kinnell and others

NC ELECTIONS

.....
Any comrades missing copies of any of the above should write or phone in immediately to get copies.
.....

AMENDMENTS

The deadline given for amendments in branch circular no. 55 - June 17 - was a typing error. The true deadline was given in circular no. 54:

JUNE 24

Please send all amendments to the centre before that date.

* It is not quite clear whether McInnis wishes this document voted on as a whole or taken as background to his resolution in this IB.

RESOLUTIONS

On agenda

This Conference recognises that the Constitution of the WSL makes no provision for mass, collective expulsions of comrades such as those proposed by the NC majority. The Constitution spells out the individual right of comrades to appeal, which should be upheld.

Conference therefore decides:

1. That on principles of natural justice, the representative and observer for the expelled comrades must be allowed to hear and reply to the speech from the NC majority which motivates and seeks to justify the charges of 'disruption' laid against them.

2. That all the expelled members who so wish should be present during the appeal period, and be given the right briefly to add additional points in their own defence if they wish.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALIST FACTION

On perspectives and tasks

Conference agrees to concentrate WSL's energies through focusing on the following:

1. Developing our use of the transitional programme beginning with the framework outlined in 'A Question of Strategy' (IB 114).

2. Developing our approach to mass work beginning with the approach outlined in the documents passed last summer (Oliver on Wiganisation, Jagger/Hoplin/Fraser/Organfield on youth work).

3. Developing our existing workplace organisation including workplace O. branches, and further developing our work around industrial disputes.

Comrades will be required to focus their political commitments through these methods whilst scope will be given for branches to develop new initiatives.

Branches will be expected to send proposals to the incoming NC for an immediate programme of education around these areas of work drawing on international as well as national experience.

As soon as the branches and NC have discussed this approach, area aggregates will be expected to complete the details and coordination.

MCINNIS, EDINBURGH

McInnis has also asked for the document 'A Question of Strategy' to be put on the agenda. I am not clear as to whether he wants the whole document voted on, or is submitting it as background to the above resolution.

Finance

1. Minimum dues will rise from £2 to £4. 2. Any comrade who attends a conference or event which involved receiving expenses will donate at least 10% of those expenses to the organisation. (Branch organisers and National treasurer to implement). 3. Any comrade who receives a sum of money over £50 from a windfall, rebate, etc. will donate at least 5% to the organisation.

ENTWHISTLE, NOTTINGHAM

[Note. Under each of the headings in this report I have consulted comrades centrally involved in that work, and in some cases the section is written by such a comrade rather than by me. I had talked to Dupont about Southern Africa work and Keith about Palestine work, but was not able to contact either of them when finally drafting this report, so they bear no responsibility for the respective sections.

Given the limitations of the pre-conference period, and the heavy pressure of other agenda items, I have focused the sections in this document on practical solidarity work.

Some sections are very brief and could usefully be expanded by amendments.]

CENTRAL AMERICA

Our basic position on the current struggles in Central America is set out in the December 1981 TILC resolution (WSR 2). Discussion on this is further taken up by Stanford's forthcoming Internal Bulletin on 'Revolutionary Perspectives in Central America'.

Duarte's victory in the El Salvador presidential elections is a victory for the US. Despite that the US remains very far from stabilising the situation in line with its wishes. The Nicaraguan government's moves for elections are certainly a part of an attempt by the Sandinistas to 'call the bluff' of the US by aligning themselves with a solution acceptable to EEC imperialism and Mexican capitalism, but they are also positive in themselves for working class socialists, and reflect the strength of the Sandinistas' position. The problems faced by US imperialism in its tactics are expressed by its forced climbdown over the mining of Nicaraguan ports.

The basic pressures in the situation thus drive the US either towards acceptance of the sort of solution proposed by the EEC and Mexico, or towards full-scale intervention. As we noted in December 1981, "US imperialism faces problems in moving from threats to actions, because of (a) the weakening of its power... (b) the opposition it would face - for diverse reasons - from the American people; (c) the increased importance for imperialism of its relationships with Third World bourgeois and military rulers, who in turn have become increasingly conscious of their own interests in some cases running counter to those of their US sponsors..." And Nicaragua would be a different proposition from Grenada. Nevertheless, Grenada showed that the US is willing to move from threats to actions, given the conditions. The conclusion of December 1981 holds today with double force: "Sounding the alarm is a major task in the workers' movement of the imperialist countries".

Our solidarity work (STANFORD:) To the best of my knowledge our Central American work consists of my (rather inconsistent) activity in Manchester. There were four or five comrades from around the country at the labour movement conference.

It's probably fair to say that the mainstream within ELSSOC and the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) see solidarity work as a charitable venture - at the moment the NSC is cooperating with War on Want to send school-books, medicines, etc. to Nicaragua. They also see themselves as pressure groups. Last year the NSC saw one of its main priorities as lobbying for an increase in EEC credits to Nicaragua. ELSSOC spends a lot of time making propaganda for the proposals of the 'Contadora group' (a diplomatic grouping of Central American governments including Nicaragua).

Intl/2.

Not suprisingly, the SL more or less completely liquidate into this current - they certainly don't challenge things like the proposals for a negotiated peace (as far as I can make out they think that negotiations are a good tactical ploy). Despite this, there are various rumours to the effect that the leadership of ELSSOC are unhappy about Trotskyists wrecking their campaign. It seems likely that Stalinists have been stirring things up.

In Manchester, where the ELSSOC branch is dominated by the SL, the Stalinists and 'human rights activists' split off to form their own campaign.

ELSSOC has regions which more or less correspond to Labour Party regions (the NSC doesn't seem to have many local branches). Given our limited resources, I suggest that we keep our intervention to one or two comrades in each of the ELSSOC regions. Whilst rejecting any sectarian propagandism, we should put forward our own perspectives on Central America and the need for a more clearly labour-movement-oriented solidarity campaign.

Such a principled position should bear fruit, especially as the arguments inside the solidarity movement heat up.

TURKEY (by Levy)

Last November's elections in Turkey have led to, not a return to civilian rule, but a modification of the military dictatorship in power since September 1980. Both the conditions under which the election took place, vetting of parties and candidates by the junta, compulsory voting, etc, and the eventual victory of the conservative Motherland Party with an absolute majority, confirm the generals' insistence on there having been a 'return to democracy' as mere rhetoric.

It is aimed, in particular, at Turkey's NATO and EEC partner countries to offset growing unease about the junta's banning of independent trade unions, tortures, executions, and mass trials of its political opponents.

The Motherland Party therefore accepts and operates within the harsh and heavily restrictive guidelines drawn by military supremo General Evren who, as self-appointed President, retains virtual dictatorial powers over the new government following drastic changes in the constitution.

Turgut Ozal, the new Prime Minister, and the MP may not have been the junta's first choice (there was, after all, one party standing led entirely by former armed forces leaders), and there is no doubt that large numbers preceived them to be the most independent option, but Ozal himself had formerly served as the junta's own economic adviser, valued for his close links with the IMF and OECD.

While continuing to expose as sham this 'return to democracy' it is still possible to argue that, in a sense, so far the junta has been successful in pursuing its programme; it has established the foundation of a new form of state, managed to secure the elections - however undemocratic they were - and prepared the conditions for a government which has 44% of the vote, 212 seats out of 400 in parliament, and does not need to struggle with coalitions.

Although it could be argued that as the civil politicians take over the control of the junta will diminish, all the signs are that it will survive for quite a long time yet, mainly because of the new constitution straitjacket and the low level of popular opposition.

Our solidarity work: On Saturday September 22 a labour movement conference is being held in London on the issue of Turkey solidarity. It has been called by a group of Labour MPs, recently come together to campaign on Turkey, in association with all the Turkey solidarity committees active in this country, including the Turkey Solidarity Campaign who originally proposed the conference.

Considering the history of generally poor relationships, and often sharp antagonism, between these committees, agreement to jointly organise this meeting itself a significant step forward for international solidarity work and will, hopefully, have longer-term implications for unity. We have always given full support to the TSC (which was, in fact, initiated by comrades who are now * supporters) so our preparation for, and participation in, this conference is of special importance. For this reason, and to help comrades get some idea of the rather complex situation within the Turkey solidarity movement, there follows some background information on the way the conference came about and the present state of Turkey solidarity work.

The TSC was set up shortly before the coup of September 1980. Its aim then was to warn of the dangers of a mass fascist movement there and probable military coup. Its supporters at that time were few and drawn mainly from the smaller left groups. Soon after, contact was made with a number of Turkish activists involved in local solidarity committees in various cities. These comrades were supporters of left-of-CP/guerillaist organisations which had built up substantial followings, usually on an anti-fascist basis, during the late 1970s. We agreed with them a common platform of solidarity demands and reformed TSC on a stronger basis. The larger non-CP British left groups began to participate, mainly through their Turkish comrades. The main British forces continued to be us and, increasingly, Socialist Challenge/Action.

TSC's primary aim has been to take the issue of Turkey into the labour movement at all levels but especially among the rank and file. A regular Bulletin has been produced and a Speakers' Tour organised in the spring of 1982. The campaign has fought to base itself primarily on Trade Union and Labour Party activists, and includes in its demand a call for a British trade union boycott, through direct action, to stop trade with the junta.

TSC has also been active in support of Turkish political refugees, begun with the successful national campaign in defence of Dogan Tarkan. Lately the campaign around the mass trial of Fatsa townspeople has brought wide support from Labour councils, notably in London, and publication of a joint Hackney Borough Council/TSC pamphlet on this issue. A campaign and discussion group for Turkish women has recently been^{re-}formed in London.

In contrast to this approach, the other two solidarity organisations have concentrated largely on the national labour movement leaders, especially those in the orbit of the Communist Party. Similarly, both the longer-established Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey and the Solidarity Committee for Democracy and Trade Union Rights in Turkey have their origins in the Communist Party of Turkey. British CPT supporters in CDDRT split in the late '70s and the rival SCDFURT (chair Alex Kitson) together with various satellite committees on Peace, Women and Culture, was established by majority CPT supporters in May last year. Bitter rivalry has existed between these two factions, spilling over into a street brawl at last year's Labour Party conference.

Lying behind this continued disunity, which TSC has always tried to overcome, is a fundamental disagreement over conceptions of what solidarity work should be, and specifically the distinction between a political party and a solidarity campaign. To coincide with recent moves by Labour MPs to promote cooperation and joint activity between the various Turkey campaigns, TSC has produced a statement setting out its views on this issue.

The Parliamentary Labour Party Turkey group is, as yet, an informal grouping. It is based on those MPs in London whose constituencies contain the largest Turkish communities: Jeremy Corbyn, Chris Smith and Ernie Roberts, and has the active support of about another ten. Given the acute problem of relations between the solidarity committees, it has become virtually the only body with sufficient independence and authority to command the support of all of them. The conference has come about as a result of a series of joint meetings hosted by these MPs held since last November.

Intl/4.

Though not yet finalised the format and agenda of the conference have been broadly agreed, with the TSC's proposals largely accepted. The meeting will be delegate-based and aimed at the maximum involvement of those who attend. It is planned to be a working meeting, largely workshops, designed to be both educational and practical. The issues likely as workshop discussion subjects are: DISK and the Turkish trade unions; Kurdistan; Women in Turkey; Repression of the peace and cultural movements; Fatsa; Turkey and the Middle East; Cyprus. The meeting is being held in the NUR headquarters in Euston Road, London. Leaflets will be available shortly, hopefully with a number of national labour movement sponsors.

TSC, and our comrades in particular, can play an important and possible decisive role in determining what kind of conference it turns out to be. It is important that as many of us as possible are delegated to attend. In addition CLPs should press their MPs to pledge their support.

PALESTINE

The situation in the Middle East is bleak: the PLO split, Lebanon de facto partitioned. Yet the recent conference of the LMCfP showed increased strength - the product of ideas filtering through the labour movement via the detailed process of resolutions, speakers to meetings, etc. The continued acute instability of the Middle East, and the resulting threat of war and even world war, will also focus attention on the area.

Our basic policy on Palestine was set out in the TILC resolution of August 1982 (WSR 2). Since then it has become clear that there are substantially different interpretations of that resolution, and a new discussion on the basic issues is called for. The incoming NC should organise it.*

The best way of broadening our work in the LMCfP is to set up campaign coordinating groups in various cities. Recognising that the LMCfP primarily orients to labour movement activists interested in Palestine, rather than to activists concerned with Palestine before all else, these coordinating groups should function on a modest scale to get speakers, resolutions, and newsletter sales in the LP and TU branches in their areas.

SOUTH AFRICA

The new black labour movement in South Africa continues to develop. A new union federation is likely to be formed soon, uniting a number of other unions around the axis and basic orientation of FOSATU. Although the politics of this trade union movement are not highly developed, and on a strict definition are syndicalist, the movement marks an important break from the popular-frontist/guerillaist strategy of the ANC and the Communist Party. FOSATU refused to join the latest popular-front opposition coalition, the UDF, for straightforward and clearly-stated reasons of class independence.

We should discuss the applicability of the slogan of a workers' party based on the trade unions in this situation.

The apartheid regime is not immediately threatened: in fact, it has recently strengthened its position by its negotiations with Angola and Mozambique. Nevertheless its medium-term prospects are difficult: this fact is reflected in the current splits within the white-supremacist bloc.

Our work in Anti-Apartheid has fallen off, but in view of the great political importance of South Africa we should revive it. The basic line of our work in AA is clear: labour movement orientation, rather than appeals to UN, etc; direct links between British and South African workers.

* Ellis's forthcoming IB, held up in production for some time, on 'Anti-Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict', should be material for this discussion.

Intl/5.

POLAND

Poland was not included in the NC's original list of areas for international solidarity work. The Edinburgh branch has proposed that it be added.

The available evidence indicates that the new official 'unions' are still weak (Solidarnosc reports that in the Lenin shipyard at Gdansk, for example, the official union has 88 members out of 14,500 workers), and Solidarnosc still maintains a substantial organisation. Solidarnosc reports that collection of union dues and payment of union benefits still continue in many areas, and May Day turnouts this year were 10,000 in Szczecin and substantial elsewhere.

The hunger strikes by Solidarnosc prisoners, however, reflect the difficulties faced by Solidarnosc in fighting back.

Apart from Solidarnosc's own limited efforts, these hunger strikes have been publicised hardly at all except by us and the Lambertists, and then inadequately - partly because there are real problems in getting full or up-to-date information.

The Polish Solidarity Campaign in Britain scarcely exists any longer. The best way for us to develop solidarity work is round the issue of the prisoners - getting O. and TU branches to adopt Solidarnosc prisoners, etc.

IRELAND based on a discussion with Foster

The situation in the North remains essentially an impasse. The sectarian Six County state cannot be reformed. The British Army cannot defeat the IRA. The Provisionals, however, still centre their strategy around a military struggle based on 10% of the Irish population, with 20% actively hostile and 70% (in the South) mostly indifferent. Over 14 years of the war in the North they have not been able to shake the hold of the established parties in the South seriously; and their recent move to the left will not enable them to do so, for it leaves them still within the limits of populism, nationalism, and militarism. Working-class socialist politics demand a radical alternative to the Provisionals' whole frame of reference.

The impasse means that there are strong pressures on the British government to accept the 'joint authority' option in the report of the New Ireland Forum (an alliance of the constitutional nationalist parties). Prior has indicated some interest in the option, and the influential bourgeois magazine the 'Economist' has come out strongly in favour of it. Pressure from the US and the EEC will also work in the same direction.

There are tremendous problems with that option, though, from the point of view of the British bourgeoisie. It would be fiercely supported by the Northern Protestants, and not strongly supported by any grouping within Ireland. There is a high probability, therefore, of the New Ireland Forum proving a complete failure - and that will further strengthen the Provisionals' position as against the SDLP, i.e. it will do the exact opposite of the New Ireland Forum's original intention.

The Provisionals' shift to the left and the resulting 'dialogue' between them and the Labour left has unquestionably boosted the LCI. The fact that the IMG/SL/SA has put a lot of resources into the 'Labour and Ireland' magazine has also given it a lift. A number of new branches have been formed, and not only by the IMG/SL/SA.

The LCI is still, however, not very strong. And there are tremendous political problems with the basis on which it is now being led by the IMG/SL/SA. Solidarity with the Irish national struggle will be very unstable and feeble if it is based on the idea that the Provisionals are a proletarian-socialist movement. Some indication of that instability was given by Livingstone's panic

Intl/6.

united-front with the Tories on the GLC over the Harrods bombing.

Nevertheless the IMG/SL/SA's domination of the LCI is far from total, and many of the other activists in the LCI are receptive to our politics. We have lost out fundamentally by not having sufficient forces involved.

As regards the immediate perspectives for action of the LCI, the priorities are pretty clear: continue the work in the LP, make renewed efforts at the difficult job of taking the work more widely into the trade unions, and mobilise for the August 18 demonstration (called jointly by the LCI and other groups).

Our immediate task should be building the biggest possible labour movement contingent for the August 18 demonstration. In the process of doing so we should aim to increase our forces involved in the LCI and thus secure a better hearing for our politics there.

Membership. Our membership currently stands at between 130 and 140. This compares with 172 at the end of February this year; 178 at the August 1983 conference; between 210 and 220 at the September 1982 conference; and between 200 and 210 at the time of fusion (the nominal membership was then higher, but a number of nominal members never really became part of the fused organisation).

The last 18 months or so has unquestionably been a bad period. The worst period was the summer of 1983, when, in addition to the departure en bloc of the Morrow group (about 20 members) we had a net loss of about another 20 through individual resignations.

Over the last six months or so, however, recruitment has certainly increased, notably among youth. If we can put an end to the sort of internal problems which tied us up and repelled people in 1983, we can regain lost ground.

Between August 1983 and February 1984 we lost 28 members and gained 2 . This level of turnover is far too high, whatever the net result. The basic cause has been intense, unremitting, escalating but decreasingly political faction-fighting, and the fact that conference decisions apparently had no effect on it.

We do not have sufficiently detailed material to hand to give a precise picture of changes in the composition of the membership. The broad trend, however, is to an increased proportion of youth and unemployed, and a relative decline of members in better-paid jobs, such as teachers. This has an effect on our financial situation.

Activity

Trade unions: The fact that the industrial organiser elected last July, Smith, confined himself almost totally to local industrial work has created problems. Nevertheless a good deal of central effort has been put into the trade union work by Levy and by Hill.

We have fractions functioning (generally in a fairly ramshackle way) in the UCW, rail, NALGO, and CPSA. The TGWU fraction has lapsed and should be revived. Our national work in the NUT depends mostly on the individual work of Lejeune, and should be developed by a functioning fraction.

Predictably we were marginalised at the Broad Lefts Organising Committee conference. We have had a significant role in some individual Broad Lefts, but in the UCW and the NUR the existence of the Broad Left itself is very feeble. Our pamphlet on the Broad Lefts, which has been particularly successful at occasions such as the CPSA conference, indicates the broad lines on which we should continue the work in the Broad Lefts.

Regular workplace bulletins, already in decline last year, have now disappeared completely from our work. This is a serious setback, and the incoming NC should look at reversing it.

We have a leading role in the campaign to build O. workplace branches. Where our comrades have built such branches, they have been useful and often brought new political contacts forward. The possibilities here are hardly tapped yet.

Our work round the miners' strike will be reported on separately.

The March 10 NC decided that we should hold a trade union school. Work for this should be got underway as soon as possible after the miners' strike. The purpose of the school should be: to compare notes and discuss perspectives on our work in the Broad Lefts; to launch a new drive on workplace branches; to discuss possibilities for workplace bulletins; and to consolidate our TU fractions and/or get them organised.

O: In terms of our input (both delegates and fringe work), we did better at the last O. conference than before. But the effect was less, because the political tide was running against us. This was most vividly expressed in the cold reaction of people at the conference to our front page on the new leadership.

As a result of that political situation, we have not been involved in any large-scale campaigning initiatives in the O. over the last year - with the exception of the S*V, which was a fiasco. A political balance-sheet on that fiasco has appeared in the paper.

Local situation, however, have been more varied. Some local O.s have swung sharply to the right; in others, a movement to the left continues; in yet others, both movements combine, with the 'soft-left' dividing two ways. This gives us possibilities of winning some of the best left activists. The generally good reaction of local O.s to the miners' strike shows that the O. left is far from dead and gone.

In terms of grass-roots local involvement our position in the B. network is fairly strong - probably stronger than SA's, despite all their fuss and bluster about it.

Youth: This has been our major success area recently, certainly in terms of recruitment.

It cannot be said that the main campaigning priorities we decided last year - YTS, YCND - have been carried through thoroughly, though excellent work has been done in some areas. Nevertheless the sum total of our work as reflected at the J. conference was a considerable improvement over last year.

The qualitative breakthrough has been the development of serious student work for the first time in the history of the fused organisation or either pre-fusion organisation. This should not be underestimated. Historically student recruitment has been central to the development of Marxist organisations in their early stages.

Women: This area of work has suffered worse than any other from the faction fighting. The fusion broke down here earlier than elsewhere, and in the absence of any decisive action to break open the situation the faction-fight dragged on to 'the common ruin of the contending forces'.

Last summer the work collapsed almost completely. Since then it has been reconstituted so that the WF paper appears regularly and there is a small number of local groups. The paper still sells very well, but the activists around it are much more narrowly League members and sympathisers than three or even two years ago.

The local government conference planned for June had to be postponed

because of a clash. The postponed event should give possibilities for broadening out WF.

A problem frequently discussed has been the possibility for a full-timer for the League's women's work, and the organisation of an adequate leading committee for that work. No immediate solutions are visible, but this should be a leading priority in every review of resources.

Black work: Our black work remains largely uncoordinated, efforts at national meetings having been unsuccessful. It is necessary to recognise that our immediate possibilities in this arena are very limited, but the incoming EC should be charged with seeing that at least a regular series of discussions between the black comrades and chosen NC representatives is set up.

National events: The League extended weekend school in the summer, and the broad groups day school in the autumn of 1983, were small (we planned for that), but useful for those attending. The broad groups AGM was poorly attended and scrappy. The major reason for this was the 'gutting' or 'deadening' effect that the acute factional conflict inside the League has had on the internal life of the broad groups.

The September 17 conference was a considerable success. It was approximately the same size as our April 1982 trade union conference, showing that in terms of real activity we have not suffered as much as the membership figures might indicate. Most of the faults in the organisation of the conference arose from excessive pessimism in the planning.

Internal organisation

Centre: Following the April 1983 conference, we reorganised our central apparatus in July 1983.

The primary aims were to get a proper administrative apparatus, to organise a drive on paper sales, and to get the finances in order.

Success on those counts has been limited by various factors. First, the continuing, escalating, and decreasingly political faction-fighting, draining away a great deal of central time and energy. Second, the fact, as noted above, that the elected industrial organiser in fact took no responsibility for national organisation of industrial work. Third, from January, Cunliffe's withdrawal from the paper.

Other factors affecting the July 1983 reorganisation were the withdrawal of Fraser as women's organiser and the withdrawal of Cunliffe as international secretary. Also Cunliffe was absent from the paper, by agreement, for a number of weeks in late 1983 for holidays and for a visit to the US.

The net result of all this has been (a) that our effective central apparatus has been very small - barely larger than, for example, WF had in 1972 for an organisation less than half the size and with a vastly smaller range of activity; (b), specifically, Kinnell, Joplin, and Levy have spent much of their time not doing the primary jobs they were allocated in July 1983 but 'filling in' on other jobs. The result is that administration, youth, work, and paper sales organisation have suffered.

The other major casualty of the inadequate running of the centre has been the magazine.

The major gain over the last period in terms of central organisation has been Jagger's work as London organiser.

Finance: We have a continuing financial crisis. Being hard up and uncomfortable financially is probably almost inevitable for a revolutionary organisation, but our level of financial crisis is not. It has very specific causes:

- a) A continuing high level of debts from the branches.
- b) Poor paper sales.

Some picture of the situation can be gauged from a comparison of the WSL's present budget with the old I-CL budget shortly before fusion. If the figures are adjusted for a fortnightly paper then and a weekly now, then:

On the expenditure side, rates and phone are the major items to have increased sharply (each doubling). The print bill and the wages bill are both down.

On the income side, commercial work is up (it was negligible before). But dues are roughly what they were and paper money is down.

We cannot reduce our expenditure substantially without seriously reducing our activity. Indeed, certain items of expenditure should be increased. A move, which is desirable both for political and (in the long term, for financial reasons, will mean higher rent. Full-timers' wages have not been increased for three years, and are still based on a dual scale (some receiving the higher old WSL rate, others the lower I-CL rate) which was originally decided as a temporary anomaly for a short period after fusion. Even apart from the fact that the wages are often not paid regularly, this creates a strain which makes the functioning of the centre difficult and recruitment of new full-timers difficult too. We should at least aim to level up the wages.

We should increase our income.

- a) A paper sales drive. The present level of paper sales is intolerable not only financially but also politically.
- b) A general dues increase (amounting to about 40% overall). This should give us a firm foundation to re-stabilise ourselves. It means increasing the rates to approximately the 1980-1 I-CL rates (which were themselves a reduction on previous I-CL rates).

Areas: London, Yorkshire, and Scotland have more or less functioning area structures. The black spots are the Midlands and the North-West. The incoming NC should take these in hand.

After the October 1983 organisers' meeting, the OSC proposed that Oxford and Basingstoke should be brought into the London area. The conference should ratify this proposal.

Branches: There is a chronic and long-standing problem of maintaining the lively functioning of both a broad group and a League branch in the same area. Almost everywhere one or the other tends to become lifeless. This raises problems which go wider than this organisation report and need to be discussed by the incoming NC.

There are also areas where neither functions properly. The central administrative apparatus needs to be got into sufficient shape to monitor this regularly and take action where necessary.

Organisational aspects of conference decisions

After the September 17 conference we convened an organisers' meeting on October 23 to discuss organisational implementation of conference decisions - in particular on Wiganisation and education - in detail, branch by branch.

As a follow-up, each branch (except Oxford) was visited, or there was lengthy discussion with the branch organiser on the 'phone, and there was a second organisers' meeting on March 11.

The organisers' meetings were useful, and we should make them a regular feature - perhaps on the Sundays after alternate NC meetings.

There have been problems, however.

First - a smaller problem - Oxford virtually boycotted the first organisers' meeting, and the whole Smith faction boycotted all but the first hour or so of the second meeting. In addition correspondence with Oxford failed to yield any replies, so for most practical purposes Oxford was out of range as far as the whole process of chasing up conference decisions was concerned.

Secondly: since late November, the organisation has been more or less constantly in a 'state of emergency' - partly for good reasons (the NGA dispute, the miners' strike), partly for bad (Kinnell having to do the work round the NGA dispute in the north-west, the sharp escalation of the internal faction-fighting from the later stages of the NGA dispute). In such situations the painstaking following-through of detailed remoulding of our routine work is bound to suffer.

To put the whole situation in perspective, it must be remembered that we have been in a constant (though less acute) 'state of emergency' ever since summer 1982. Now it is perfectly possible to combine lively internal debate with vigorous external activity. For example, WF has some very useful discussions on the general strike in the midst of the great struggles of 1972. But the sort of unresolved power battle that we had for two years, geared round political issues which were indeed important in themselves as well as 'symbolic' for the power battle, but generally remote from our day-to-day work, is very difficult to combine with healthy external activity.

As well as the drain on the centre, we have had a sort of 'spontaneous federalism' - comrades recoiling from the national life of the organisation and burying themselves in local activity. This is obviously an additional difficulty for any nationally-planned remoulding of our work.

The upshot is that many branches have got no further than the good-intentions stage on both Wiganisation and education. But if we have maintained the basic fabric of the organisation through the last difficult period, then, once the internal factional situation is resolved, we can hope to make progress.

Not that, the factional situation once resolved, everything will be perfect and the centre will be free of faults! Far from it. But we will be in a qualitatively better position.

August conference decisions

See above on Wiganisation, education, contact work, area and branch structures. Proposal: further regular organisers' meetings to chase up.

CND: The CND commission has not been convened - and it should be - but a system of more or less regular liaison between Kinnell and Strummer has been set up for organising this work. Our intervention at the CND conference last December was pretty good, and certainly qualitatively better than anything we have ever done before at CND conference.

Booklet of all current League positions: The EC on September 3 1983 resolved that we "must first focus resources on getting 'Wiganisation' and 'Building the WSL' underway" before turning resources to this project. The problems described above mean that this project is now floating in the misty future. I think the conference should recognise that the August decision was foolish - an attempt to substitute an unwieldy administrative project for the job of building a political cadre - and rescind it.

Commissions: The youth commission has continued to function. The Australia commission has been reduced to two comrades by Gardiner going to Australia, but has continued to maintain contact with Australia. The gay commission has not been reactivated: it should be. The Irish commission is still dogged by the problem of finding an adequate convenor: the incoming NC should look for candidates.

Unemployed work: The Southwark comrades were to re-draft their document, which they haven't done. This seems to reflect the fact that our unemployed work has now been swivelled to focus on YTS.

April conference decisions

Campaign on TU democracy: We decided to make a turn to BLOC, and the production of our successful pamphlet is a reflection of that.

Revive anti-union laws campaign: There has been a running problem with this, namely that Smith volunteered to take on the job but (despite all reminders etc.) never did anything because, as he eventually told us, he considered the project 'not viable'. Kinnell made contacts and got tentative commitments in Merseyside over the NGA dispute, but soon afterwards the NGA called off the picketing and dished us. The basic arguments for this campaign still hold good and have been fully confirmed over recent months. A major new initiative is not possible during the miners' strike, but as soon as that is over we should review possibilities.

Cuts/privatisation: Comrades have been active in most areas in health cuts campaigns, and some work on coordinating this was done by Smith.

O. workplace branches: See above.

Coordinating counsellors: Meetings have been held, a comprehensive document on this work has been produced and a (not very satisfactory) discussion held round it.

Build LAW: In practice this campaign has only been 'ticking over'.

Increase sponsors of paper: Not done.

WF re-launch: See above.

Gays/Lesbians: We decided to mandate each branch to hold a discussion. In most branches this has not been done. It should be.

Youth work: See above.

(On the above, refer to IB 76 for August conference decisions, IB 60 for April conference).

Summary and tasks

The balance-sheet can be summarised as follows. We have been through a difficult period - the break-up of a fusion; an internal conflict which no vote could resolve, no discussion clarify, no concession soften. The plans we set for big steps forward have generally not been achieved. In particular, the double turn towards 'Wiganisation' and towards education and contact work has not been carried through as a national turn.

Nevertheless we have maintained the basic fabric of the work of the organisation: and that, in such circumstances, is something. Once we had begun to free ourselves from the internal problems, we were in a position to do very good work around the miners' strike.

At the major national events which give us a summary index of our position in different spheres, our performance this time round was generally better than previous years: the O. conference, the J. conference, the CND conference. If there had been a proper O. women's conference in 1983 to make a comparison with, then undoubtedly the 1983-4 comparison would be favourable there, too. Our major public event - the September 17 conference - was successful.

Org/7

We have opened up a new and potentially very fruitful area of work among students.

The tasks for the next period depend on the conference's decision about reinstatement of the Smith group. If the conference decides in favour of reinstatement, then the chief organisational task will be holding the line - maintaining the basic fabric and functioning of the organisation - through the ensuing internal brawl up to the inevitable second split. If the conference decides against reinstatement, then we can make steps forward.

1. Consolidate our basic organisational structure - central administrative apparatus, branch organiser network, area committees, finance.

2. Reshape our whole orientation to give more emphasis to mass work aimed at people new to politics ('Wiganisation') and to detailed political consolidation of our own forces (education, contact work). This has to be at the expense of, but not to the exclusion of, routine 'going to meetings' activity.

3. Increase paper sales. These have been actually declining over the past year, despite our decision to work to increase them. Although it is next to impossible to sell papers to striking miners themselves, the miners' strike does express a change in the whole political situation which greatly improves our prospects for selling papers. What we need now is to bring the paper from the margins towards the centre of each comrade's activity.

NEW DUES SCALES PROPOSED BY OSC AND EC

Minimum	£2 per month	(as at present)
£150-£200 net income liable to dues	5p in the £	(currently zero)
£200-£300	15p in the £	(currently 10p)
£300-£400	25p in the £	(currently 20p)
Over £400	40p in the £	(currently 30p)

This increase, as near as we can calculate, will raise our total dues income by about 40%.

ADDITION TO 'BUILDING THE WSL' (IB 107).

Section XI.

A. We are building a combat organisation for the class struggle. Its central, irreplaceable role is to sustain, continue, develop and bring into that struggle a scientific system of ideas.

As Trotsky put it, "The mass organisations have value precisely because they are mass organisations... Small organisations which regard themselves as selective, as pioneers, can only have value on the strength of their programme and of the schooling and steeling of their cadres. A small organisation which has no unified programme and no really revolutionary will is less than nothing, is a negative quantity".

Or again: "Revolutionary ardour in the struggle for socialism is inseparable from intellectual ardour in the struggle for truth".

Any serious consideration of our methods of discussion and of organisation must take this starting point into account.

A loose consultative democracy or a method of consensus, without any effort to argue major issues through rigorously; a loose regime in which there is no binding overall political line, and no fight to win ideological homogeneity (through convincing people) - these methods make any democracy they produce simply worthless, since they negate the very purpose that discussion has for revolutionary Marxists.

B. Since the above sections I-X were written, the problems outlined in section II and III have become more acute.

We have been living through the progressive breakdown of the 1981 fusion. This has created a chronic internal conflict which no vote could resolve, no discussion could clarify, and no concession soften - for the root of it was the inability or refusal of the Smith group to accept any other mode of functioning than one which made its pre-defined 'worker leadership' the centre of a process of consensus politics.

The political issues argued about - the South Atlantic war, the Labour Party, the women's movement, Ireland, etc - were indeed important in themselves. But they also had a symbolic significance for the conflict about modes of functioning and status in the organisation. Involved in each dispute - and, increasingly, displacing any Marxist or would-be Marxist argument about the immediate political issue - was an issue of the status of Smith in the WSL, and of his status and relation to his chosen political lode-star, the 'world Trotskyist movement'.

This conflict developed stage by stage until by early this year it had reached the point of 'internal secession' - two hostile groups within one organisational shell.

The process had extremely destructive effects not only on the external work but also on the internal life of the organisation. For most members the major disputes - or rather the fury with which they were conducted - seemed almost irrelevant; and indeed there was a rational basis to this, because the heat in the disputes was little (or, in the case of the South Atlantic war dispute, in which the call for a special conference came after the war was over, nothing) to do with their significance for our immediate day-to-day class-struggle work.

The internal channels of the organisation were clogged up with such disputes, and increasingly also with organisational conflicts. Bad disputation drove out good. Ordinary interchange of experience was pushed aside. Serious political issues could rarely be discussed without becoming factional.

C. This situation could be resolved only two ways: either by convincing all concerned, and specifically the Smith group, of some commonly-agreed rules

of functioning; or by a parting of the ways.

To try to cure the symptoms of breakdown of the fusion into two antagonistic groups by worthy administrative proposals (standing orders, booklets of WSL policy, regular reports, etc.), while doing nothing about the political roots of the problem is futile. It amounts to little more than stating the wish that things should be otherwise: that meetings should be orderly and constructive, issues should be clear, communications should be good, morale should be high, etc. In practice all it could do is add a hubbub of points of order, questions of procedure, and local organisational details to the already-existing hubbub of motions of censure and votes of condemnation.

Such proposals are doubly beside the point, given the fact that they rely heavily on increased administrative efficiency, i.e. a better central apparatus, when they are coupled with a lack of constructive concern for assisting and augmenting the work of the centre.

D. All this is not to say that standing orders, regular reports, etc. are unimportant. They are important. The point is that the basic political problems must be resolved first.

E. We should reaffirm the constitutional position of the leading committees:

"Without a strong and firm leadership, having the power to act promptly and effectively in the name of the organisation and to supervise, consolidate and direct all its activities without exception, the very idea of a revolutionary organisation is a meaningless jest... The National Committee is the sovereign body in the WSL between Conferences. It is responsible for political decision making and group organisation. Its decisions are binding on all members ... The EC is responsible for the day to day implementation of NC decisions; for reacting to events which require immediate action; and for political leadership... The Organising Committee is responsible for the day to day running of the WSL between EC and NC meetings... The OC and EC, operating under NC control, have the right to issue binding instructions to all members, branches, fractions etc. of the WSL".

If the OC or EC takes decisions which should properly have been left to a higher committee, it is the job of that higher committee to call them to account.

We reject the idea that the EC cannot make WSL policy. Anything decided by the EC is WSL policy unless and until the NC overturns it. Anything decided by the OC is WSL policy unless and until the EC overturns it. We are at all times, and not just at NC meeting times, a democratic centralist organisation.

F. If ^{all} disciplinary procedures are made so laborious that no disciplinary action can be taken against comrades without a full procedure of the type used for suspensions, expulsions, etc., then the details of day-to-day discipline become extremely difficult to enforce.

Pressure of League public opinion should be our fundamental method of ensuring our discipline. But we cannot renounce the use of ancillary methods such as fines, etc. Branches, fractions, leading committees etc. should be able to levy small fines on comrades for such things as absence, non-fulfillment of financial obligations, etc.

The problem of a lax attitude to financial obligations is a very real one for us. On the other hand, there can be no serious issue of democracy in the imposition of fines on comrades for, for example, being late in completing dues assessment forms. If anyone feels they are being treated unjustly, they can appeal before the punishment is carried out.

G. Regular organisers' meetings, on the model of the October 23 1983 and March 11 1984 meetings, should be organised.

In addition to these, and to NC report-backs to branches and areas, we

should have some three or four national get-togethers - summer schools, weekend schools, broad group conferences, rallies, - 'activists' conferences', as appropriate - each year.

The purpose is to allow exchange of experience, increase comrades' awareness of and identification with the national organisation, promote discussions without the pressure of conference votes, etc.

Snap or hastily-prepared votes at such events would not be a proper method of WSL policy-making. A national WSL event is either a properly-convened conference, or it is not. The above events would not be.

Policy-making via conferences, or 'national aggregates' which could at short notice be transformed into conferences, every few months, would produce a sort of consultative democracy, not Bolshevik democratic centralism. Such apparently democratic regimes in practices have always led to manipulation by a central leading group as the only alternative to chaos. Witness the experience of the IS/SWP in the 1960s.

To propose frequent 'national aggregates' as a way of resolving the recent problems of the organisation is particularly untenable given actual recent experience. In 1983 we had three full conferences of the WSL and two other national gatherings, the summer extended weekend school and the broad-groups day-school/AGM. Whatever the merits of those events in other respects (and they had some), they did not lessen the factional heat in the organisation: on the contrary.

H. The press of the organisation should be under the control of the EC and editors appointed by the NC and accountable to the EC and NC.

The EC should - for the sake of breadth of input, etc. - convene an EB for the paper including non-EC members. The important political decisions, however, rest with the EC.

The details of when and how the EB should meet should be decided by the EC.

I. The press should be edited so as to promote the line of the WSL.

This cannot mean that articles analysing events are forbidden to venture any ideas beyond what is written in a WSL resolution: such a rule would reduce the paper to a stultified blandness.

We should maintain a liberal attitude to the expression of minority views in the press. The decision as to whether to publish a particular minority view must always, however, be at the discretion of the majority: otherwise we undercut the very idea of a single WSL line.

The sort of circumstances in which a minority view would not be published are: where it would undercut an action being organised by the WSL; where it would directly give aid to our enemies against the WSL, and thus compromise the integrity of the WSL; or where the issue in dispute was an immediate class-struggle issue, and publication of the minority line would seriously weaken our press as a fighting force.

J: More resources should be given to education - WSL classes, broad group classes, schools, etc. The basis of this education should be WSL policy, and reject the idea that basics of revolutionary Marxism can be neatly separated off from issues of current dispute: on the contrary, the links should be made whenever possible. In internal WSL classes and schools, however, these should be no hindrance of the right to argue minority views, and no atmosphere of heresy-hunting.

K: One of the most important things for the development of education is the magazine. The incoming EC must so organise our resources as to ensure its publication.

L: The magazine should also boost our international work. The incoming EC should appoint a group of comrades to continue this work. Through reports, schools, articles etc the broader membership should be kept informed. Where there is sufficient interest and knowledge among a group of comrades, a commission on a particular aspect of international work may be organised by the NC. We reject, however:

a) The false and demagogically-flattering ^{notion} that every comrade can contribute equally to international work, irrespective of knowledge, experience, etc;

b) The notion that the deficiencies of our international work to date can in any way be remedied by reasserting a desire for the sort of spread of international commissions which was set up at fusion, and failed to function because it was plainly beyond our actual resources unless we were to turn ourselves into a near-full-time discussion group.

M: We recognise that proposals to improve the administrative and organisational functioning of the WSL are empty words unless they go together with a commitment to strengthen our centre, which at present is far too weak, in the first place by getting our finances on an even keel.

N: A structure such as outlined above can permit cooperation and disciplined common work even with quite wide political differences within the organisation. Now, however, we must try to create such a structure, by endorsing the NC's action in separating the WSL (by the means available, i.e. expulsion) from the Smith group which de facto was imposing a quite different structure and mode of operation on the WSL.

AFGHANISTAN: FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF USSR TROOPS!

Draft resolution by Carolan for the EC

I: Four and a half years after the invasion, the results of the Russian occupation have to be tabulated as follows:

a) The USSR has 100,000 troops in Afghanistan, and yet has only a very unstable control of the main cities such as Kabul. Guerilla activities take place regularly even in Kabul, where Russian soldiers are regularly attacked and last autumn the USSR's own 'embassy' was attacked.

b) Almost the entire countryside is beyond the control of the invaders, who are an army of occupation which moves in unsafe military convoys and by air.

c) The $4\frac{1}{2}$ years of Russian occupation have seen the progressive disintegration of the Afghan state machine, especially of the army.

d) The vast majority of the population is in bitter opposition to the invaders and large numbers are in arms against them. The USSR army uses the methods of the US in Vietnam and of Hitler's army in Europe to beat down the people. Villages are napalmed, crops destroyed, towns bombed out of existence in 'reprisal'.

e) Close to three million refugees have fled to Pakistan and over one million to Iran.

f) Large areas of the economy are devastated.

g) Afghanistan has not been assimilated to the USSR system, yet serious steps have been taken to integrate its economy in a dependent relationship with the USSR. The USSR is engaged in extensive mining and surveying operations for a wide range of minerals, including uranium.

II: The April coup of 1978 placed in power a regime based essentially on the army. It had the following notable features.

a) The ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), had a large base in the army and had won political hegemony over the decisive sections of the officer corps.

The links between the PDP and the officer corps were very close. This arose from the close relationship of the Afghan state apparatus to the USSR and its military-bureaucratic caste. Since the mid-'50s the USSR had equipped the armed forces and trained their officers.

The officers had developed ideas about their mission to develop and modernise Afghanistan in the face of the feebleness of the Afghan bourgeoisie according to a pattern familiar in many underdeveloped countries, but with the peculiarity that the client status of Afghanistan vis-a-vis the USSR inclined them to look to the bureaucratised workers' state as a model of a developed society. Their view of their own future was as an elite, like the USSR bureaucracy, on the basis of a serious social transformation.

b) Because of the absence of a mass base for the PDP outside the armed forces, the 'revolution' unfolded as an attempt at reform from above, stamped throughout and limited in every respect by its military-bureaucratic origins and the limitations of the PDP.

The 20-month history of the PDP-army regime, until the Russian invasion of December 1979 put an end to it and replaced it, was marked by the narrow base of the regime and the attempt to use the armed forces as the instrument of a social transformation which proved obnoxious, for varying reasons, to the big majority of the population.

Despite its unusually close links with the bureaucracy of the degenerated workers' state, the regime never got beyond the stage of being a military-bureaucratic state-capitalist regime attempting to carry through the bourgeois

programme of land reform, educational reform, and some easing of the enslavement of women.

Its methods in relation to the Afghan masses were never other than military-bureaucratic: the bombing and strafing of villages, including the use of napalm, from the first weeks of the regime, and the figure of 400,000 mainly non-combatant refugees by the end of 1979, graphically sum up the military-bureaucratic regime's relationship with the Afghan masses.

c) The opposition to the PDP regime consisted of:

- *the landowners, antagonised by the regime,
- *the priests, many of them landlords,
- *usurious capitalists,
- *the masses of peasants.

All these were tied together and hierarchical, social and personal ties maintained, under the slogan 'Defence of Islam'.

The utterly reactionary character of the opposition is clearly expressed in its common bitter antagonism to any educational or social advance, or alleviation of the condition of women.

Outside Afghanistan many forces assisted. Pakistan gave facilities for training, drilling and raising money through the opium trade. Various Muslim powers gave money and guns. China gave guns and training instructions. Probably the CIA was involved - though not to the degree that Russia said.

d) It is difficult to get accurate information about the degree of support the PDP-Army regime did have. Some demonstrations were staged. Nevertheless the known course of the Muslim revolt, the difficulty of the PDP-Army regime in standing up to it, and the incapacity of the regime to rally even significant, let alone decisive, masses of the population in support of reforming decrees that should have benefited millions, provide us with a clear proof of the feebleness of whatever support the PDP had outside the army.

It does not even seem to have been able to muster a fraction of the support from urban petty-bourgeois and plebeian forces achieved by Jacobin formations in 18th century Europe, although the conflicts in Afghanistan have many points of comparison with those between such Jacobin regimes and peasant opposition.

e) Socialists in Afghanistan would have had to give critical support to specific measures of the state capitalist regime, but in no sense could they have supported the regime as such. It would have been necessary to maintain class independence; to aim at dismantling and destroying the state apparatus; to criticise and expose the brutal military-bureaucratic methods of the regime as both counter-productive in relation to the reforms and expressive of the class character of the regime. Socialists would have faced the repression of the one-party PDP-Army regime.

Socialists would have directed their fire against the reaction, and in that sense only would have 'supported' the PDP-Army regime, while maintaining political and if possible military independence from it and striving to overthrow it.

III: Afghanistan had for 25 years been a client state of the bureaucracy and from 1978 had drawn very close to the USSR, which dramatically increased the number of its 'advisers', military and civilian.

As the regime increasingly showed ineptitude and fell apart, the Russians were drawn in to substitute for the PDP and the disintegrating army. Months before the December 1979 invasion the air force was being run by the USSR. The logical finale was the invasion, which marked the end of the Army-PDP experiment and opened a new chapter.

Russia invaded:

* because of lack of confidence in the 'leftism' and intransigence of the Amin regime and its obvious incapacity to stabilise Afghanistan.

* because defeat of the PDP-Army regime would have placed in power a hostile regime on its borders (though this should not be exaggerated: the invasion has done just that in the case of Pakistan, which has since been rearmed and reinforced by imperialism).

* because to allow defeat of its client could undermine its relations with other client states like Ethiopia.

* because - and this is probably the fundamental thing - the disarray and weakness of imperialism following its defeat in Indochina and the then recent collapse of Iran as a military power seemed to allow the possibility of the Russian bureaucracy expanding its area of control with impunity, and in a strategically important area.

Further expansion through Baluchistan to the sea may well be in the minds of the Russian bureaucracy. In the '40s it seized and plundered territory in Eastern Europe and Manchuria, with the consent of imperialism. The USSR is not imperialist in the sense of being based on monopoly capitalism, with its inherent drive to expand and divide up the world - but the bureaucracy does seek to gain and plunder new territories when it can. As Trotsky indicated nearly half a century ago: "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 castes, medieval estates and classes".

The foreign policy of the USSR today is that of a relatively stable bureaucratic degenerated workers' state. Since World War 2 it has increasingly been the co-equal of imperialism in terms of military power, in a world in which the H-Bomb has led the rulers of imperialism and the bureaucracy so far to rule out full scale war as a means of trying each other's strength. In that period the bureaucracy has been the twin pillar of world counter-revolution, the other being American imperialism.

It has taken opportunities to expand its area of control, as after World War 2. Competition with imperialism has led it to support a number of autonomous, mainly Stalinist-led, third world anti-imperialist movements of a relatively progressive character.

In underdeveloped countries, the USSR's post-October-Revolution, non-capitalist social system has allowed the Kremlin bureaucracy the possibility of relating to revolutionary movements in a seemingly positive way. Its own social structure has allowed it to seem in line with the anti-imperialist and even anti-capitalist objectives of the revolutionaries.

It has 'evoked' revolutionary movements in areas such as Eastern Europe - and almost immediately, or simultaneously, strangled them, imposing a repressive totalitarian regime as the social instrument of the rule of a parasitic bureaucratic caste, on top of the revolutionary transformation it has carried through or helped through.

At the same time, the bureaucracy's limited rapprochement with imperialism has meant that CPs under its control in the advanced countries have betrayed the revolutionary movements of the Italian, Belgian, French and other working classes repeatedly. And the awful example of the USSR and its satellites, presented as socialism by the reactionaries, has been a major dead weight on the struggle of the world working class for the socialist revolution.

It has repeatedly shown itself to be capable of being 'revolutionary' against imperialism and capitalism; but always it has been simultaneously counter-revolutionary against the working class, striving to set up its own type of bureaucratic regime. Where it has aided revolutions, as in Cuba, it has at the same

time shaped and moulded the resulting regime to its own totalitarian pattern.

In a large part of the world - the USSR itself and Eastern Europe - the USSR bureaucracy is the first-line or second-line direct enemy of working-class socialism.

For all these reasons, the bureaucracy, taken as a whole in ^{its} relation to world politics, has been a fundamentally reactionary and anti-revolutionary force.

IV: In Afghanistan, to have any hope of creating a friendly regime, the Russians would have had to carry through the land reforms and other reforms. They have the strength, including the military resources and the physical power, that the PDP-Army regime did not have, and therefore could carry through these changes.

But in fact one of the first things that the post-invasion USSR-puppet government led by Babrak Karmal did was to slow down and then abandon the programme of land reform.

The indications are that the USSR intends to stay in Afghanistan. The implications of this must be eventually - if they can conquer the peoples of Afghanistan - the full assimilation of Afghanistan to the collectivised bureaucratic system of the USSR.

V: In the overall context, such a transformation, paid for at such cost, cannot be progressive. Trotsky argued:

"The occupation of eastern Poland by the Red Army (in 1939-40) is to be sure a 'lesser evil' in comparison with the occupation of the same territory by Nazi troops. But this lesser evil was obtained because Hitler was assured of achieving a greater evil. If some body sets, or helps set a house on fire, and afterward saves five out of ten of the occupants of the house in order to convert them into his own semi-slaves, that is to be sure a lesser evil than to have burnt the entire ten. But it is dubious that this firebug merits a medal for the rescue..." The argument against 'lesser-evilism' applies equally to Afghanistan too.

As Trotsky indicated:

"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 world revolution".

And again:

"The statification of the means of production is, as we said, a progressive measure. But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all other factors. Thus, we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by 'socialist' measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the socialist revolution with manoeuvres and so on. The evil far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland. In order that nationalised property in the occupied areas, as well as in the USSR, become a basis for genuine/progressive, that is to say socialist development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy... We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin."

We call for the withdrawal of troops because of their overall reactionary role, in terms of political pulverisation of Afghanistan, strengthening the

Russian bureaucracy, and reactionary effects in world politics (reinforcement of Stalinism and cold-war forces). We argue for the mobilisation of progressive forces in Afghanistan independently of and against the Russian Army.

- VI: The opposition to the Russian occupation includes all the forces rallied against the PDP-Army regime, plus significant sections of the PDP and Army themselves.

Some sections of this opposition claim to have a relatively enlightened bourgeois-liberal programme. There is no solid evidence, however, that the core of it is other than a reactionary Islamic force in terms of its social programme and ideology.

The opposition, however, cannot be assessed as simply an ideological current. It is almost an entire population in arms against an oppressive invader. The rights of the peoples of Afghanistan cannot depend on the ideological views expressed by their leading political-military forces.

Imperialist and other foreign support for the rebels also continues. But this too cannot be taken as a decisive consideration. The great majority of the population of Afghanistan cannot be dismissed simply as catspaws of imperialism.

- VII: In general, revolutionaries have never favoured 'export of revolution' by military adventures. This would be so with a healthy workers' state, and especially in the epoch where nuclear war could annihilate civilisation if not humanity.

Avoidance of war, short of surrender to imperialism, would have to be part of proletarian revolutionary policy. We oppose peaceful coexistence, which essentially means the subordination of the struggles of the workers and masses to deals between the USSR and imperialism, wherever the USSR can control events. But opposition to peaceful coexistence is not a demand to the alien and anti-proletarian Kremlin bureaucracy to start World War 3 to further the revolution.

The consequences of the Afghan invasion, in intensifying the cold war and giving credence to the imperialists' claims in the eyes of many in the labour movement, are unconditionally reactionary consequences, the responsibility for which rests with the Russian bureaucracy in the first instance.

Our attitude in the cold war is of course determined not by secondary considerations, or by the events in Afghanistan as such, but by the fundamental antagonism between the USSR and imperialism. In this we are unconditionally for the defence of the basic property relations of the USSR.

Imperialism will not settle with the bureaucracy, the proletariat will. And imperialism or bourgeois democracy are not progressive alternatives to Stalinism in the USSR and similar states. That is the fundamental meaning of the defence of the USSR for Marxists.

As Trotsky pointed out:

"Our tasks, among them the 'defence of the USSR', we realise not through the medium of bourgeois governments and not even through the government of the USSR, but exclusively through the education of the masses through agitation, through explaining to the workers what they should defend and what they should overthrow. Such a 'defence' cannot give immediate miraculous results. But we do not even pretend to be miracle workers. As things stand, we are a revolutionary minority. Our work must be directed so that the workers on whom we have influence should correctly appraise events, not permit themselves to be caught unawares, and prepare the general sentiment of their own class for the revolutionary solution of the tasks facing us".

"We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (planned economy and state property),

and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern".

We defend the USSR on the basis of proletarian politics independent from the bureaucracy and its policies, and we distinguish between conflicts flowing from the bureaucracy, representing its interests and psychology, and conflicts in which the basic question of the existence of the USSR as against imperialism is posed.

"In every case the Fourth International will know how to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction, and where it defends the social basis of the USSR". (Trotsky)

VIII: From the above our line and tasks follow.

We are opposed to the imperialist outcry. Imperialism can have no rights in Afghanistan, nor any right to attempt to drive the Russians out.

The USSR bureaucracy should withdraw its army. The anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist proletarian revolution can neither be served nor expanded by such an advance by a social force that is the enemy of the revolution, even if the result of the advance is the assimilation of Afghanistan into the social system of the USSR.

As Trotskyists, we defend the basic property system in the USSR, and we also maintain our political independence from the bureaucracy. We reject any implication that the bureaucracy, since it can seize territories and peoples and incorporate them to the social system of the degenerated workers' state, is thereby expanding the revolution. We reject the implied position of many would-be Trotskyists that power-bloc politics and the foreign policy of the USSR bureaucracy can replace or supplement the class struggle.

