

International  
Trotskyist discussion bulletin



Number 2

**Twenty two theses  
in defence of  
Trotskyism**

*Movement for a Revolutionary  
Communist International*



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# **Twenty two theses in defence of Trotskyism**

*Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International  
Mouvement pour une Internationale Communiste Révolutionnaire  
Movimiento por una Internacional Comunista Revolucionaria  
Bewegung für eine Revolutionäre Kommunistische Internationale*

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*These theses are dedicated to the memory of  
comrade Rémi Malfroy 1952-87  
French Trotskyist militant,  
member of Pouvoir Ouvrier and the MRCI  
who died on Monday 25th May  
while this pamphlet was being produced.*

The Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria)  
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany)  
Irish Workers Group  
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)  
Workers Power (Britain)

# Introduction

The explosion and disintegration of the Healy led, 'International Committee of the Fourth International' in 1985/6 was but one symptom of the growing crisis of centrism of a Trotskyist origin. None of the major fragments which emerged from the collapse of the Fourth International into centrism has escaped serious splits in the last decade. Major fractures, like the 1979 split in the USFI, have only laid the basis for unprincipled fusions, (Moreno-Lambert) and yet further splits. The cynical game of political 'musical chairs', splits, fusions and further splits, engineered by centrist leaders has only demoralised and needlessly wasted thousands of revolutionary minded militants.

Both the major traditions—the IS/USFI and the 'anti-Pabloite' International Committee have gone down the road of ever more openly jettisoning everything that Trotsky stood for. Trotsky's perspective and strategy of Permanent Revolution, the use of the programme of transitional demands and the building of an international of democratic centralist revolutionary parties have all been abandoned at every critical conjuncture. From Cuba to Nicaragua the Mandel led USFI has surrendered to 'revolutionary leaderships' of a Stalinist or a petit-bourgeois character. They have repeatedly proved that they cannot and will not defend the leading role of the proletarian party and the Trotskyist programme in revolutionary situations.

But the champions of 'anti-Pabloism'—Healy and Lambert have fared no better. Their surrenders and accommodations have been as gross and complete as those of Pablo and Mandel. For this reason tendencies like those gathered around the SWP(US) and the Argentine Moreno group have been able to zig-zag between 'Pabloism' and 'anti-Pabloism'. Healy's capitulation to the 'Arab revolution' led in the end to his entering the service of assorted bourgeois, bonapartist regimes that were viciously repressing their own working classes. Today the American SWP—once the fountain-head of 'orthodox Trotskyism'—openly renounces and attacks Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The SWP's erstwhile Australian disciples have taken the full logic of Barnes' position to the end and renounced Trotskyism

and the Fourth International, plunging headlong into Stalinism.

The Lambertist International tendency has split over whether or not to proclaim itself *the* reconstructed Fourth International whilst its sections hide behind pseudo-social democratic 'workers parties' with utterly bourgeois democratic programmes.

The Morenoite LIT, despite claiming to have split 'in defence of the party', is no better. It is openly in favour of a Fourth International in which Trotskyists are a 'minority', and has a record second to none in complete capitulation to bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism—especially with regard to Peronism in all its forms in Argentina.

Every one of these capitulations, every gross betrayal of the Trotskyist programme, has led the healthiest elements within these centrist organisations to seek to rediscover Trotsky's heritage, to search for the roots of this political degeneration. The Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI) itself grew out of just such struggles in centrist organisations. It was therefore not surprising that the call for an international conference made by the British WRP struck a positive response in many countries, especially where the crisis of centrism is most profound. The welcome for the WRP's initiative was based on the desire for an international conference which was democratic, open to all those who considered themselves Trotskyist and were genuinely and loyally willing to commit their organisations to a process of discussion. The purpose had to be to examine the roots of the crisis of the Fourth International which led to its political collapse and disintegration and to overcome that crisis by struggling to forge a new world party of socialist revolution.

It has become clear that the WRP called 'international conference' will not be able to play such a role (unless the WRP leadership is forced to reverse its current course dramatically). In pursuing its aim of a shotgun fusion with the LIT the WRP leadership has progressively restricted participation in its international conference. First the original 'ten point' call, itself a politically erroneous and inadequate document, was turned into a set of *conditions* which organisation had to endorse

to be allowed full participation in the conference process. Not content with this an 'eleventh point' was added shortly before a preparatory committee was set up to ensure the exclusion of all the 'unwanted' organisations from this committee (now effectively the WRP/LIT). This committee will now decide the nature of the conference and attendance at it.

The fact that the WRP is taking its 'international conference' down the road of the 1980 Moreno/Lambert Parity Committee—with a quick, unprincipled fusion at the end of it—does not make the necessity for a real, open and democratic international conference any the less urgent. In the light of the complete abandonment by the WRP of support for such a conference, the MRCI declares itself willing to work with any groups considering themselves Trotskyist to relaunch such a project, with or without the WRP/LIT's preparatory committee. 1988, fifty years since the foundation of the Fourth International, is a fitting date to make a serious attempt to tackle the *political* problems

which have rent asunder Trotsky's work.

The *Twenty two theses in defence of Trotskyism* adopted at our last conference and presented here are the MRCI's starting contribution to such a discussion process. They were drawn up as a submission to the WRP called international conference. It is our belief that the process of building an international Trotskyist tendency worthy of the name can only start with a clear break from centrism, and from the methods that have dragged the banner of Trotsky's Fourth International through the mud. These theses, we believe, restate the fundamental principles of Trotsky's programme and attempt to combat the centrist perversion of them. They provide the basis for a revolutionary bloc against centrism. They also provide a starting point for developing further discussions towards elaborating a programmatic document which can be a real basis for regrouping and refounding a Leninist Trotskyist International.

MRCI Secretariat May 1987

# Twenty two theses in defence of Trotskyism

**1** The theory, perspective and programme of permanent revolution retains its full validity.

In the imperialist epoch no fundamental remaining tasks of the bourgeois revolution can be resolved in the historic interests of the toiling masses except under the leadership of the proletariat. Nor can the proletariat restrict its class struggle to a stage involving the resolution of the agrarian question, the ending of national oppression or disunity, and the achievement of full democratic rights and liberties. It can only firmly acquire these for itself and all the oppressed classes and strata if it establishes its own political power (proletarian dictatorship) in alliance with them. The slogan of the *'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'* is obsolete and its revival by 'left' Stalinists or ex-Trotskyists' (like the Barnes led SWP-US) only prepares a Menshevik noose for the working class. The objective necessity of the revolution in permanence must, however, be translated into a conscious strategy by the proletarian party. To turn permanent revolution into an objective process which uses differing leaderships—Stalinist, petit bourgeois nationalist or centrist, to achieve 'its' ends is to throw onto the historic process the tasks of revolutionaries. It is a centrist distortion of Trotskyism characteristic of both the IS (Pablo-Mandel) tradition and the IC (Healy, SWP, Lambert) tradition, as well as of their various offshoots. It leads to the capitulation of the proletarian vanguard to alien class forces.

**2** The political and organisational independence of the revolutionary party from bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism must be fought for in all phases of the struggle.

The experience of the KMT and all subsequent bourgeois nationalist parties and fronts in the semi-colonial and colonial countries has shown the absolute indispensability of the revolutionary party and of its maintaining complete organisational and political independence from all forms of bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism even, indeed especially, when it is involved in joint struggles against a common enemy. The

Leninist position of 'unconditional but critical support' means unconditional support for all those fighting against imperialism combined with the duty to criticise politically the overall strategy and methods of struggle of these movements.

We condemn as unprincipled the political support given to such movements by the centrist FI during the Bolivian revolution of 1952 (towards the MNR) and thereafter by the IS in Algeria (FLN), Cuba (Castroites), Portugal (MFA), Nicaragua (FSLN), Grenada (NJM), Ireland (IRA), by the IC in Algeria (MNA), Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh), Libya (Gadaffi), Iran (Khomeini), Iraq (Ba'athists) and by the Morenoites in Argentina (Peronism).

**3** The proletarian vanguard must seek unity in action with petit bourgeois or even bourgeois forces whenever or wherever they are in actual combat against imperialism's military, political or economic oppression and exploitation of the semi-colonial and colonial countries.

As long as imperialism supports or installs regimes compliant with its wishes in the semi-colonial countries and as long as it economically exploits them, broad strata of non-proletarian classes—the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeois—will be driven into struggle around slogans of nationalism and democracy. Even sections of the indigenous exploiting classes and their military and ideological representatives may, from time to time, be driven to oppose this or that action of imperialism despite the fact that in general these classes act as agents for imperialism within their respective countries. When battle is joined between these nationalist forces and imperialism or its local agents the proletariat cannot remain neutral. In the imperialist heartlands it is the duty of the proletariat to give unconditional support to those fighting 'their' bourgeoisie. In the semi-colonial countries the proletariat—while maintaining its absolute class independence—must engage in joint actions against imperialism, observing the principle 'march separately—strike together'. That is, we defend the Leninist/Trotskyist tactic of the Anti-Imperialist United Front. We

reject the popular frontist distortions of this tactic that are aimed at creating popular fronts with the 'anti-imperialist' bourgeoisie up to and including forming 'popular' or democratic bourgeois governments (a distortion not only typical of the Stalinists but also of various 'Trotskyist' fragments—all of the Trotskyist groups in Bolivia, for example, supported co-government of the COB/MNR in 1952, the CODEP in 1965/66 and the FRA in 1971/72). We reject the concept of a strategic bloc with the national bourgeoisie in colonies and semi-colonies.

United action must not be a pretext for the confusion of banners—i.e. of programmes. The proletariat can never give political support to a bourgeois government nor set itself the object of installing one. It must never renounce its objective of establishing its own class rule. Tactical alliances must not become strategic ones—that is, popular fronts. The working class must reject the deceitful slogans and ideology of nationalism and populism (Sun Yat Senism, Arab nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Sandinism etc.). In united action it cannot renounce criticism of its allies. We reject the scandalous political support given to Khomeini by both sections of the USFI before and after he came to power. Likewise we reject sectarian abstention from anti-imperialist struggles and actions on the basis of the 'cross class' leadership of such actions e.g. the iSt's refusal to support the struggle against the Shah of Iran. Such sectarian positions invariably contain an opportunist kernel—an attempt to politically differentiate the petit bourgeois nationalists from the reformist or bourgeois nationalists in the popular front. *Victory to the left wing insurgents* in El Salvador, for example, presents the FMLN as somehow politically in advance of the FDR to whose political programme it is tied.

**4 A resolute fight is needed against opportunist distortion of the workers' government and workers' and peasants' government slogans.**

The only workers' and peasants' government which it is possible for communists to give political support to, or under certain circumstances to participate in, is one which emerges out of a period of victorious mass struggles and is based on working class and peasant organs of struggle. It must be a government committed to defending the workers' organisations and solving the political and economic crisis at the expense of the bourgeoisie. The most elementary programme of such a government must consist of arming the proletariat, disarming the counter revolutionary bourgeois organisations, expropriating all capitalists who sabotage production, installing workers' supervision over production, ensuring the burden of taxation falls on the rich not on the workers and peasants. It must actively support

the struggles of workers and peasants internationally.

We completely reject the 'baptising' of governments, such as that of the FSLN in Nicaragua, which are openly committed to defending 'mixed economy' capitalism and which consequently attack the workers' organisations and the right to strike, as revolutionary workers' and peasants' governments. We reject the USFI's designation of the Sandinista government as a 'Proletarian Dictatorship'. Such a characterisation is both absurd and reactionary.

**5 It is necessary to mobilise the masses under transitional slogans corresponding to the concrete situation in each country.**

Transitional demands must be supplemented by revolutionary democratic demands whenever what is involved is a struggle against the remnants of pre-capitalist agrarian relations, national oppression or different varieties of openly pro-imperialist dictatorship (bonapartism—both military and civilian, and fascism and all anti-democratic methods of rule within parliamentary democracies), support for the struggle for democracy, for the constituent assembly, for liberties of the press, trade union rights or other kinds of democratic slogans. We reject the method which sees the struggle for democratic demands as synonymous with the struggle for workers' power. This method presents the achievement of a democratic constituent assembly as the strategic path to establishing a workers and peasants government (Lambertists/USFI and the Morenoites in Peru 1978-80). The crowning slogan of the programme of transitional demands is the call for soviets. All attempts to chart a road to real working class power based on the belief that there is a substitute for soviets or soviet type organisations inevitably lead to a capitulation to alien class forces, for example, the USFI's capitulation to the MFA in Portugal and to Solidarnosc and its parliamentary (second chamber) illusions in Poland. Soviet type bodies are the only organisational form thus far furnished by history that draw in representatives of all those groups and strata fighting for the revolution and co-ordinate the struggles of these groups. Soviets are the highest organisational form of the class struggle and the embryonic organs of working class power. Therein lies their transitional content. It is the fight for these types of organisation (whatever name they are given by the masses of a particular country and whatever their nationally specific characteristics) within the revolutionary situation that distinguishes authentic Trotskyists from all manner of centrism.

Where there exist embryonic forms of proletarian state power other than soviets which can be made to embrace the mass of the



exploited and oppressed (e.g. the factory committees in Germany 1923) we do not counterpose, in a doctrinaire manner, the building of soviets separate from such bodies. Rather we strive to extend these embryonic forms into real soviets.

**6** The slogan of workers' and peasants' councils (soviets) is central to the programme of democratic and transitional demands in the semi-colonial countries and degenerate(d) workers' states as well as in all capitalist states. Whilst they may take nationally specific names and forms they must not be confused with the puppet consultative bodies of left-nationalist regimes.

The fight for soviet type organisations remains a central task in revolutionary situations. Whatever name is given to these bodies they must aim to draw in, alongside the organised proletariat, all the oppressed strata—in the cities the unemployed, the sub-proletariat and the impoverished petit bourgeoisie, the women workers and housewives, the shanty town organisations and tenants' groups; in the countryside the peasant organisations, poor peasants and agricultural proletarians as well as the rank and file soldiers. They must organise on the basis of the widest democracy with complete freedom for all parties excluding the openly bourgeois, openly counter-revolutionary and fascist parties.

We reject the position that organs of 'popular power' can be substitutes for soviets where these organs are thinly disguised, powerless transmission belts for left bonapartist regimes—for example Nicaragua's CDS's, Grenada's Communal Councils (1979-83). We reject the classification of primarily trade union organisations as substitute soviets—Solidarnosc, COB of Bolivia (outside of the revolutionary situation of 1952). Such a classification of trade union bodies has been used by the Morenoites, Lambertists and FIT as a way of avoiding the necessary tasks associated with fighting for soviet type bodies in order that they will not have to confront the reformist trade union leaders. We reject the Maoist/Guevarist strategy of guerilla warfare based on the peasantry as a substitute for working class leadership and proletarian forms of the struggle in the fight for power—the general strike, soviets, the workers' militia and armed insurrection. Trotskyists reject the strategy of guerrilla warfare because it isolates, politically and physically, the revolutionary fighters from the proletariat. Its methods—rural or urban guerilla war—cannot be participated in by the mass of the working class. These methods can and do easily degenerate into banditry in the countryside and into individual terrorism in the cities. Whilst Trotskyists must defend petit-bourgeois revolutionaries against bourgeois state repression and may utilise guerilla

operations in circumstances where they will assist and not stand in contradiction to the mass struggles of the working class, we completely reject the bankrupt guerilla-ist strategies (Guevarism etc). We condemn the USFI's capitulation to this guerilla-ist tendency, especially in Latin America from the 1960's and into the 1970's and the IC Latin American sections in the early 1960s. We condemn the USFI's continued equivocation on this question, namely its effective endorsement of the guerilla-ist strategies of the ANC, Philippines Communist Party, IRA and others.

**7** We recognise the necessity of systematic communist fraction work in the proletarian mass organisations especially the reformist trade unions. We recognise that it is also necessary to apply the tactic of the workers' united front within the trade unions with the aim of transforming them into revolutionary instruments in the struggle against capitalism.

We recognise that the trade union bureaucracy is a privileged caste which arbitrates and negotiates within the framework of capitalism. Increasingly in the imperialist epoch it is turned into an economic police force over the working class for the capitalists and their state. We are for the construction of fighting alliances of rank and file militants (united fronts) to oust the reformist bureaucrats in the struggle to democratise the trade unions, turn them into industrial unions and unite them into one big union confederation. Communists must struggle inside these rank and file organisations for revolutionary leadership with the avowed aim of transforming the trade unions into organs of struggle against capitalism.

We reject the tactic of building organisations which act primarily as electoral machines for left talking candidates but fail to transform the unions themselves into real organs of struggle. We reject the building of 'class struggle left wings' which are aimed primarily at winning over 'left' bureaucrats by curbing criticisms of the vacillations, errors and betrayals of such bureaucrats. We reject the syndicalist approach to rank and file movements which tails the immediate demands of the workers and rejects the key task of mobilising rank and file workers for struggle around transitional demands and under the leadership of the communists. In the unions and workplaces we fight for workers' control over the production process and against the bosses' attempts to manage production in their interests.

**8** The popular front is the surrendering of the interests of the working class, and its capacity to fight for them, to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Far from fighting fascism or reaction it prostrates the proletariat before them.

Typical of both types of reformist party (Stalinist and social democratic) is their

willingness to form electoral pacts or governmental coalitions with the openly bourgeois parties. Stalinism systematized this in the theory and strategy of the popular front. *This noose around the neck of the proletariat* is disastrous in all situations but is especially so in a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation (France 1936, Spain 1936-9, Chile 1973 etc.). Revolutionaries must give no political support to a popular front but must fight within the mass workers' organisations that support it for a break with the bourgeoisie and all its parties. We reject alike the critical support given to the Allende popular front government (USFI) and the sectarianism that holds that critical electoral support cannot be given to the candidates of the workers' parties in a popular front (iSt). Revolutionaries must use the varied tactics of the *workers'* united front to aid the breaking up of the 'peoples front' with the bourgeoisie. This may necessitate entering mass base organs of a popular front and fighting to expel the bourgeois parties. Only firmness in principle but flexibility in tactics can avoid either adaptation or self-isolation by the revolutionary vanguard. We defend all democratic rights of the masses against military, bonapartist or fascist coup d'états. Where an 'anti-imperialist' regime of a popular front or liberal-democratic kind finds itself under attack by the pro-imperialist military, a temporary united front with forces defending it will be necessary (unless the working class is in a situation to take power immediately). It will also mean refraining from calls for the overthrow of these governments at the time of threatened coup d'états. But as with the case of the Bolsheviks and the Kornilov coup this tactic must in no way express confidence or political support for such governments or the abandonment of the struggle for a workers' and peasants' government.

**9 The social democratic and Stalinist parties in the imperialist countries are bourgeois parties; more specifically bourgeois workers' parties—that is their leadership, programme and organisations have a bourgeois political character, but these parties are organically linked to the working class (through their proletarian origins, through trade unions/co-operatives, or through mass working class membership or electoral support).**

The united front tactic must be used to exploit the contradiction between the working class base and the leaders of these parties. With the united front tactic it is possible to break the rank and file away from the reformist leaders and programme. We reject the views originating from third period Stalinism, Bordigism and Maoism which see in social democracy only a bourgeois party no different from the Christian Democratic or Conservative parties. This view rejects the united front tactic or

allows for it 'only from below'. In conditions where revolutionaries do not have the forces sufficient to counterpose themselves as an independent party and where the relative openness of the worker membership of the reformist parties to revolutionary ideas allows them to fight openly for them within its ranks it is permissible and indeed desirable for Trotskyists to enter them. Under certain conditions—extreme crisis and disintegration within the reformist parties or the formation of left centrist wings within them—Trotskyists may carry out a 'French Turn', that is, total entry on a relatively short term basis. Where such conditions do not prevail it is permissible for revolutionaries to carry out fraction work on a relatively long term basis, whereby an open organisation is maintained but a portion of the organisation enters the reformist party, carries out systematic work within it including united front struggles, with the objective of building a revolutionary tendency inside the reformist party.

We reject the entry tactic as a strategy whereby Trotskyists conceal from the rank and file their real programme and enter into uncritical blocs with left reformists. This distortion of Trotsky's tactic was pioneered within the FI after the Second World War by Pablo and his lieutenant Gerry Healy in Britain (where it was advocated and practiced by him from the mid-1940s through most of the 1950s). It was codified and given theoretical formulation by Pablo in 1951—*entryism sui generis*. This distortion of Trotskyism has been a central part of the practice of many of the degenerate fragments of the FI since that time (Moreno, Healy, Mandel etc). The task of Trotskyists is to constitute a revolutionary wing, not to disguise themselves as left reformists or centrists. With such forces it is possible to form united fronts but not propaganda blocs—separate banners, separate contingents. We reject as right centrist the notion (as held by Militant in Britain for example) that the reformist parties can be transformed into revolutionary parties, and that they can form governments 'pledged to socialist policies' which can abolish capitalism. We also reject the sectarian abstentionist position that entry into the reformist parties is *ipso facto* liquidationist (SWP-GB, Lutte Ouvriere etc). This Oehlerism conceals a deep fear on the part of these organisations of their own lack of a sufficient political differentiation from reformism.

We reject the method of building propaganda blocs or big centrist or left reformist parties formed between left groups or between revolutionaries and reformists on the basis of demands selectively chosen from the programme of transitional demands but which exclude its crowning point: soviets, the workers' militia and the need for insurrection

(for example Socialist Organiser and Labour Briefing in Britain, the MAS and PO in Argentina, the MPPT of Lambert in France). Neither the united front, the workers' government, nor the workers' party tactic can justify Trotskyists trimming the *Transitional Programme* to facilitate a propaganda bloc with left reformists or centrists. We stand by Trotsky's 1935 critique of all such unprincipled blocs.

10 We reaffirm Trotsky's position that Stalinism is a counter revolutionary force—the twin of social democracy within the world workers' movement. Where Stalinist parties have taken and hold state power on the basis of post-capitalist property relations, and thereby cease to be parties in any meaningful sense, becoming instead fused with the state apparatus, they retain their politically counter-revolutionary character. They are in Trotsky's words '*agents of world imperialism within the workers' state*'.

Stalinism's distinction from social democracy is that its roots lie not only within the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy of the more developed capitalist and imperialist countries but also, and decisively for its specific character, in the ruling bureaucracy within the workers' states. This bureaucracy has either usurped power from the proletarian vanguard or prevented it from achieving it even where capitalist rule has been abolished. It blocks the road to the creation of socialism both within the workers' states and by sabotaging the international spread of the revolution. Its politics are those of class collaboration and nationalism. Stalinism's justification for its policy is the doctrine of Socialism in One Country. This reactionary and utopian creed has laid the basis for the various 'national(ist) roads to socialism' peddled by the Stalinist parties. It serves to undermine the existence of the workers' state itself by preaching economic autarchy in the era of the world market. The case of Kampuchea reveals just how devastating this policy can be when it is taken to its logical conclusion. Other workers' states (Albania, Rumania, China) have suffered real economic catastrophes (albeit not on the scale of Kampuchea) on various occasions as a result of pursuing the programme of Socialism in One Country. For the Soviet bureaucracy, Socialism in One Country has served the purpose, since the mid-1920s, of subordinating the world revolution to its strategic goal of achieving peaceful co-existence with world imperialism. This narrow bureaucratic and diplomatic version of Socialism in One Country has cost the lives of millions of workers and underlines the fact that under no circumstances can Stalinism play a socialist, revolutionary role.

Yet Stalinism does have internal contradictions arising from the roots of the ruling bureaucracies in the nationalized and planned

economy. Since the working class in all countries has a direct interest in the preservation of these historic gains—the prerequisites for socialist construction—it is obliged, unconditionally, to defend these states against internal and external capitalist restoration. This may necessitate a united front with the Stalinists, or a section of them, against restoration. However, historically Stalinism is itself the underminer, liquidator and betrayer of these conquests.

In the more backward countries exploited by imperialism, Stalinism has developed contradictions different from those manifest in the Stalinist parties of the imperialist countries and even those in some of the more prosperous semi-colonial ones. It has hybridised itself with peasant based populism, adopting methods sharply different from those of 'official' Stalinism. In China and Indo-China the CP's adopted a guerrilla warfare strategy and rooted themselves primarily in the peasantry, adopting a revolutionary democratic programme. In Cuba, a revolutionary democratic movement destroyed the Batista dictatorship and then fused with Stalinism. While in China, Cuba, and Vietnam, Stalinist parties did carry out the overthrow of capitalism they also politically expropriated the working class before hand. This blocked the advance of socialism internally and prevented the internationalisation of the revolution. Therefore Trotskyists combat this strategy with that of permanent revolution.

In other countries Stalinist guerrillaism has led to bloody disaster (Indonesia 1966, Kampuchea 1974-79) or helped to install left bonapartist regimes (Nicaragua 1979). All of these movements utilise the methods of petit-bourgeois revolutionists. While they have, under certain circumstances, been compelled to act against the imperialists and their agents, up to and including overthrowing them, they are not proletarian revolutionists either in their politics or in the social class in which they are rooted in. From the working class' point of view their methods of struggle and their objectives are counter-revolutionary and their influence must be fought within the proletariat and peasantry.

We reject Stalinophobia—a differential hostility to Stalinism over social democracy or other alien class influences. This, with its emphasis on a monolithic nature for Stalinism ('*counter-revolutionary through and through*'), has led to softness and accommodation to social-democratic reformism (OCL/PCI, Varga-ites etc). Equally though, we reject the notion that Stalinism has a 'dual nature'. From 1948-53 this led, within the FI, to Pablo's capitulationist theories: 'two camps' with Stalinism representing the proletariat, war-revolution, *entrism sui generis* and the effective abandonment of political revolution in favour of a self-reform

process by the bureaucracy. Not only has this tradition been carried on by the IS/USFI formations but in the IC 'traditions' the SLL/WRP adapted to Stalinism (Maoism) and the iSt likewise (Poland, Afghanistan).

**11 A political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy is necessary in all the existing workers' states and independent parties must be constructed to accomplish this successfully.**

The task of the political revolution is to preserve and complete the dictatorship of the proletariat by destroying the dictatorship of the bureaucracy. Starting from the proletariat's demands for greater social equality and the abolition of privilege, and for democracy in the workplace, in the unions and in society, Trotskyists must fight for the replacement of the fake parliaments or 'soviets' by real councils of the urban and rural workers. The bureaucracy must be excluded from these organs and the executive power must arise from them and be answerable to them. This revolution cannot be accomplished by reforms alone and experience shows that the bureaucracy will have to be forcibly removed from power. The bureaucratic-military state machine which, whilst it is not a capitalist state in terms of the property relations it defends (its class character) is, in its form and structure, an alien, bourgeois, formation that will have to be smashed and replaced with the commune type semi-state envisaged by Marx, Engels and Lenin.

A programme of political revolution counterposed to all wings of Stalinism, whether liberal and democratizing or hard-line, is necessary and around it new Bolshevik parties need to be built. We reject the transformation of the political revolution into a series of reforms or a classless democratization (Mandel or Lambert). We reject the open denial of the need for political revolution in countries like Cuba and Vietnam on the grounds that Castro and Ho Chi Minh 'made revolutions' and that their regimes simply 'lack the forms of proletarian democracy'. They lack not only the form (soviets) but also the content, the direct political power of the proletariat. Here too an anti-bureaucratic revolution alone can put the working class in charge of its own destiny.

**12 Political revolutionary crises repeatedly arise and testify to the historically illegitimate nature of the bureaucracy, its incapacity to direct the planned economy or to defend the workers' states.**

In Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland the bureaucracy discredited itself repeatedly by its slavish submission to the Kremlin, by its greed for privilege and incompetence in directing the plan so that it satisfied the elementary needs of the workers and peasants. Political revolutionary crises in Eastern Europe have occurred

in every decade and even without revolutionary leadership the proletariat has created independent trade unions, factory councils and even soviets, and engaged in general strikes and mass insurrection in attempts to rid itself of the bureaucratic parasites. Yet without a revolutionary Trotskyist party these movements fell under the leadership of liberal Stalinists, social democrats or even nationalist and clerical elements. In China and in Russia too, splits and warfare within the bureaucracy have enabled the working class to begin to raise its head and indeed the key to the liberation of the workers oppressed by Stalinism lies in these massive states.

**13 Against imperialist war—only the proletarian class struggle and its victory can end the threat of nuclear annihilation.**

War is endemic to imperialism which has, with the development of atomic weapons, discovered the means to obliterate civilisation. The choice facing humanity is in the most literal sense, 'socialism or barbarism', perhaps the total extinction of our species. This fact, however cannot transform the war question into an all-class or non-class issue to be answered by a special ideology or movement—pacifism or the peace movement. This ideology and these movements remain what they were pre-1914 or in the 1930s—petit bourgeois. They are incapable of the objective they set themselves—persuading the imperialists to lay down their arms and live peacefully or, more recently, persuading the 'superpowers' to give up their nuclear arsenals.

Only the proletariat's struggle for power can disarm those preparing a nuclear holocaust, and to do this it does not need the popular front of movements like CND. Trotskyists can and should intervene in the mass base of these movements (where they have one) to combat pacifism, to expose the clergymen, the retired generals and bourgeois politicians and to win the idealistic youth for the class struggle. We reject Mandel's view that the peace movement is 'objectively anti-capitalist'. This is an excuse for refusing to confront petit bourgeois pacifism with proletarian anti-militarism. The two cannot and must not be elided.

**14 Defend Lenin's theory of imperialism and his and Trotsky's tactics on imperialist war.**

Despite the dissolution of the formal empires of Britain and France and despite changes in the pattern of investment and the relative development of certain imperialised countries the essential features of imperialism, as characterised by Lenin, the revolutionary Comintern and Trotsky's Fourth International, still exist. A small number of imperialist powers dominated by finance capital and huge industrial, raw material extractive, agricultural or trading monopolies as well as the

great banks dominate the economies of the imperialised countries and repeatedly intervene to achieve political regimes favourable to the extraction of imperialist super-profit in its various forms.

In wars or conflicts between imperialist powers and semi-colonial countries it is the duty of revolutionaries to be defeatist in relation to the imperialist powers and defencist in regard to the colonies or semi-colonies (without giving political support to their bourgeoisies). Thus, in the conflicts between Iran and the USA revolutionaries should have supported the former despite the reactionary clerical domestic regime. In the Malvinas war it was obligatory to be for the defeat of Britain and for the victory of Argentina despite the Galtieri dictatorship. In conflicts between semi-colonial countries concrete judgements have to be made based on the role of imperialism in the conflict, the national democratic issues involved and how these affect the class interests of the proletariats of both countries together, that is, the international solidarity of the proletariat, which is the sovereign question.

The same method must apply to conflicts between workers' states. We reject siding with one Stalinist clique against another because one appears 'better' than another. This impressionist method led the Mandelites to side with Vietnam against Kampuchea instead of charting an independent course of political revolution for the masses of Indo-China. Only if imperialism is clearly backing one workers' state against another will we take sides. With regard to inter-imperialist wars we are for revolutionary defeatism in all the imperialist countries. With regard to wars by imperialism against the workers' states we defend unconditionally the workers' states against imperialism.

15 Lenin's distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations is valid for our epoch and it is obligatory to defend the right of oppressed nations to self-determination and to give support to their justified national struggles without the proletariat itself yielding to nationalism.

Despite the creation of independent states out of the colonial empires, or rather because imperialism kept ultimate control of this process, one sort of national oppression (colonial) has by and large given way to another (semi-colonial). Balkanisation has divided peoples, created hundreds of national minorities and left systematic racial oppression intact in countries like South Africa. Marxists oppose national oppression as an integral element of internationalism. We must, therefore, support the right to self-determination and the struggles being waged for it by the Irish in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland and the Tamils in Sri Lanka, without giving any political

endorsement to the nationalism of the IRA or the Tamil Tigers or to their guerrilla-ist strategy and their tactics of bombings and assassinations. We do this not out of moral considerations or to make life easier, but because these tactics will not achieve liberation and will not prepare the way for working class internationalism and unity. Unconditional support for the struggle for legitimate national rights must be combined with fearless criticism of petit-bourgeois politics. It is a measure of the degeneration of the USFI and IC 'traditions' that they never managed to combine the two, either collapsing into nationalist and guerrilla-ist illusions or denouncing them as common criminals when 'terrorist actions' made life too hot for 'Trotskyists' in the imperialist heartlands.

Likewise we reject the notion that the 'interpenetration' or scattering of a people, for example the Palestinians, removes the obligation to defend their self-determination as the ist claim. This is simply a brazen excuse for abandoning an unpopular cause. The Jewish people and the Arab population in the Israeli state are not in an equal position. The latter are oppressed—millions are denied re-entry to their homeland. The Israeli state is not simply a national state but a racial-confessional one, one that restricts democratic rights to Jews. The Palestinian struggle for a secular democratic state must be supported even when Trotskyists hold that a workers' state—an Arab and Jewish workers state—can alone resolve the national question and exclude imperialism from the Middle East.

16 The struggles of oppressed races, the oppressed sex and lesbian and gay minorities must be supported.

To campaigns of the oppressed, around elements of their oppression (united fronts), Trotskyists must seek to bring the organised forces of the workers' movement. *But politically autonomous movements based on all class/no class ideologies (feminism etc.) are a blind alley for the oppressed.*

The reformist leaderships of the unions and the workers' parties, resting as they do on the labour aristocracy, systematically neglect and exclude the oppressed and the interests of the 'lower strata' of the masses generally. Communists, starting from the interests of the proletariat and its allies *as a whole*, and from their historic goal, must turn to these strata—aiding their struggles and fighting for their full integration into the revolutionised labour movement. To do this specific united fronts, caucuses and even mass movements of the oppressed may need to be built. Any movements of the oppressed that communists have occasion to call for and build as a tactical means of uniting the struggles of all workers must be composed primarily of proletarians and must

be based within, or oriented centrally to, the existing mass working class organisations. They must be proletarian movements. They must be committed to the defence of the interests of the oppressed but mortally hostile to the non-proletarian strategies on offer from the bourgeois and petit bourgeois elements amongst the oppressed. Within such working class movements Trotskyists fight openly for leadership, for without such leadership the danger of reformism or centrism dissipating the fighting capacity of the particular movement will inevitably arise. Only thus can the struggle to abolish racism, women's oppression, the oppression of lesbians and gays be victorious and only when the proletariat takes up these struggles as its own will it be possible to overcome separatist petit bourgeois ideologies (feminism, black nationalism etc.).

17 Capitalism in the imperialist epoch, driven by the profit motive, destroys the natural environment and the health and welfare of the toiling masses. The class struggle has and can impose safety measures of a limited scope but only working class power can abolish the danger to humanity's natural environment.

Whilst recognizing that the ecological movements have raised and sought to combat dangers to the environment from the nuclear power industry, the chemical industry and many others, these movements fail to root the cause of these problems in the specifically capitalist forms of industrial production. While some immediate measures, such as to improve safety or prevent despoliation of the environment, may be taken up by the working class, these movements raise all of these demands in the context of a utopian programme which stresses zero economic growth, retrogressive sources of power, the relinquishing of scientific agriculture, a 'return to nature' and other petit bourgeois fantasies. At best they ignore or fail to recognise the centrality of the organisations of the working class. At worst they attack these organisations, seeking instead to create all class/no class popular frontist type campaigns or even parties. When these parties (Greens etc) appear on the electoral field, whilst many of their reforms may be more radical than those of the bourgeois workers' parties and they may attract a far more radical membership, they remain bourgeois parties. It is not permissible under any circumstances for revolutionaries to advocate a vote for them or to suggest fusions with them (except on the basis of their dissolution into a workers' party). In certain circumstances it is possible to have a united front with the petit bourgeois movements in pursuit of limited objectives (for example the demand for a workers' enquiry, the fight to introduce safety measures, the abolition of certain reactionary laws) to be fought for by direct action including demonstrations and strikes. We reject abso-

lutely the USFI's suggestions of SPD/Green coalitions or its designation of the Greens as part of the left. A principle is at stake here—the elementary class identification of parties and of the workers' movement. We also reject a maximalist attitude towards safety and the environment. These are issues for the proletariat's immediate and transitional programmes. They must be a part of the objectives of the fight for workers' control and inspection not simply an 'issue to be dealt with under socialism'.

18 A Leninist vanguard party based on an international transitional programme which links historic goal and principles to fundamental tactics in an overall strategy for working class power is indispensable. The Transitional Programme must be re-elaborated.

Trotsky's *Transitional Programme* was based on the lessons of the immediately preceding decades and the experience of the Russian Revolution and the revolutionary Comintern. Its qualitative addition to Marxism was its definitive overcoming of the problem of the gap between immediate and socialist demands. In addition to this methodological advance it extended the Marxist programme to cover the new task of combatting the bureaucratic degeneration of a workers' state. The *Transitional Programme* combined perspectives and programme, strategy and tactics into a revolutionary whole. Fifty years on our programme again needs to be extended and developed on the fundamental method and doctrine of the 1938 document. Trotsky's epigones left the *Transitional Programme* as a shibboleth. Despite any formal adherence to the *Transitional Programme* Trotsky's epigones have, in their practice, thoroughly revised it. Some tendencies (for example the SWP/GB) frankly discarded it and rejected some of its basic pillars (the class character of the Soviet Union, transitional demands etc), returning to a caricature of the economism and spontaneism of the early 1900's. Others (USFI and IC traditions) reprinted the *Transitional Programme* but never utilized its methods and demands, oscillating between 'structural reforms' (Mandel) or third period ultimatism (SLL/WRP and Lora). Equally we reject the method of the Militant Tendency (in Britain, Spain, India, Sri Lanka, etc) which presents transitional demands to the working class as good reforms winnable under capitalism but, in the privacy of its own meetings, declares that if these demands are fought for and won then capitalism will be overthrown. In other words they treat the *Transitional Programme* as a box of tricks all of which can be played on the working class in order to help build the sect. All of these distortions of the *Transitional Programme* have a pronounced tendency to separate tactics from principles. Principles become dead 'dogma'. Tactics become oppor-

tunist adaptation to alien class forces and their programmes. Never was this more clearly demonstrated than in all the attempts to dilute the revolutionary content of workers' control, which is transitional to workers' management within the workers' state, into control schemes that in fact establish peaceful co-existence between the workers and the bosses (workers' co-ops, autogestion on the Pablo model, participation schemes or workers' plans on the model advanced by the USFI for the Lucas engineering company in Britain).

19 Democratic centralism as produced and defended by Lenin remains the only possible basis for revolutionary parties and for the revolutionary international.

Federalism within either an International or a national party grants to sections or to regional organisations effective autonomy. As such it negates democratic centralism and creates potentially antagonistic blocs which will inevitably clash and split in due time (as the federalist IC did on a number of occasions). On the other hand permanent factionalism also negates democratic centralism. If factionalism persists then it implies that an organisation is in fact split along programmatic, or even clique, grounds and as such needs to put its house in order if it is to be able to function as a democratic centralist organisation instead of being permanently divided against itself. Factions, as Trotsky said, are a 'necessary evil' of party life not, as the USFI seek to portray them, a permanent and desirable feature of it. Healthy democratic centralism rests on a revolutionary programme and the ability to defend its strategy against revision whilst adapting it tactically to intervention in the class struggle. 'Unity in action', strict discipline, assures the verification or falsification of the party's perspectives and tactic through the living practice of the membership. 'Freedom of discussion' and collective democratic decision-making allow errors to be corrected with the minimum of disruption. Regime and politics are integrally linked. In the mass proletarian organizations the omnipotence of party bureaucrats (Stalinism), parliamentarians or trade union functionaries (social democracy) represents the pressure of alien class forces within the workers' movement. Centrism, by abandoning or failing to reach the firm foundation of the revolutionary programme on which to base itself, wastes and squanders its cadre through dead-end factionalism and clique squabbles, destructive splits and unprincipled combinations. The post 1948 FI and the IS and IC traditions show these characteristic violations of democratic centralist norms.

The histories of the USFI, the OCRFI, and the LIT abound with examples of organisational bankruptcy. The USFI tradition has a tendency to mimic a social democratic internal regime,

the IC a Stalinist one, but both are violently intolerant of revolutionary criticism and both happily violate democratic centralism to silence it.

20 A revolutionary party is a serious combat organisation, organising in its ranks a significant proportion of the vanguard fighters of the proletariat. Calling sectarian propaganda societies 'parties' discredits the real thing in the eyes of this vanguard but neither can the need for a revolutionary party be abandoned or hidden in favour of strategic entry work in reformist or centrist organizations.

The first duty of revolutionaries is to say what is and no less is this the case than on the question of the party. So great was the crisis of revolutionary leadership from the 1930's onwards that revolutionary communism was thrown back to the stage of small propaganda groups in most countries. Whilst Trotsky lived the FI gave them a firm programmatic basis. With the FI's degeneration and disintegration even this disappeared. The key task over the past decades was to recover and develop that programmatic basis, not only by theoretical and polemical work and struggle but by active intervention in the class struggle. This remains the key task for revolutionaries today. It is the task of a fighting propaganda group. The centrist epigones of the FI either dissolved themselves into the 'left-wing' of social democracy (and sometimes Stalinism)—in the 1950's and again in the 1970's and 1980's—or they proclaimed propaganda groups of a few hundred (perhaps a few thousand) as mass parties. These 'mini-mass parties' vainly tried to counterpose themselves to reformism at all levels—daily papers, complete electoral slates, youth organisations etc. in a manner redolent of Stalinism in its 'third period' (for example the Healy group). The results were a rapid throughput of uneducated members, the exhaustion and squandering of cadres and the creation of a bureaucratic and tyrannical regime. Revolutionary realism must reject this heritage as it must reject the featureless 'secret entristm'. Both have discredited Trotskyism. Nor is the answer a sectarian abstentionism in the name of propagandism in the manner of the iSt, who have turned themselves into a quasi-Bordigist sect whose only 'fighting' is hyper-factional attempts to destroy their 'rivals'.

A fighting propaganda group is obliged by its size and its programmatic tasks to prioritise the task of producing material primarily for the most politically conscious vanguard elements, educating and training a cadre and participating as a revolutionary opposition in the mass struggles of the working class. In doing so it may have to use various organisational tactics: total entry as open revolutionaries into reformist parties or an independent organisation performing fraction

work in all the mass workers' organisations. Its objective is to win to its ranks ever more vanguard fighters

This method of individual recruitment can and must be combined with a positive orientation to leftward moving splits from reformist and centrist organisations. The whole history of Bolshevik and Trotskyist party building indicates that through splits, fusions and, if necessary further splits, the genuine communists can take important steps towards building a party rooted inside the working class.

**21** Centristism is a feature of transition. The degeneration of revolutionary organisations produces a rightward moving descent into centristism. Revolutionary crises and struggles on the other hand engender leftward movements from reformism (both social democracy and Stalinism) which, if they do not immediately come over to the communist movement can constitute left centrist organisations; left because their direction is away from reformism. We must combine a merciless struggle against right centristism—which is moving away from Marxism—with a serious attempt to win genuinely left centrist organisations towards consistent communism, towards a reborn Trotskyist organisation.

The centristism of degeneration, for example Kautskyism, Stalinism (pre 1934), the POUM, exists in many forms. If centristism is the oscillation between an unstable combination of elements of the politics of reformism and communism then each specific centristism will bear the marks of its origin. To centristism of a social democratic and Stalinist origin has been added centristism of a Trotskyist origin. We reject for any of these types the designation of '*sui generis*' (of a special type). If *all* that this means is that it has specific features it is a tautology. If it means that the possession of certain origins releases a given centristism from its fundamental features then it is wrong. We reject any notion of the automatic, spontaneous evolution of centristism into revolutionary communism. The fight against centristism must be conscious and result in a *break* from it and a recognition of it as a past condition of an organisation or current—that is a self critical balance sheet must be drawn. As Trotsky said '*centristism hates to hear itself named*' and it is a feature of the centrist international currents (children of the 'London Bureau' rather than Trotsky's FI) that to so characterise them is to guarantee a cessation of discussion, exclusion from a conference or expulsion from their ranks.

**22** The Fourth International definitively sank into centristism at the Third Congress of 1951 and disintegrated as a centralised international in 1953. From this date the Fourth International ceased to exist.

What has existed since are federations of

centrist groupings (USFI, IC) or smaller groupings subordinated to one large national group (IC, OCRFI, LIT, FIT, Lutte Ouvriere tendency). The causes for the collapse of Trotsky's FI were, objectively, the triumph in World War Two of the allied imperialist bourgeoisies and the Kremlin bureaucracy, the subsequent stabilisation of capitalism and the expansion of the degenerate workers' state. This falsified Trotsky's perspective and prognosis for the post-war period. The leaders of the FI—Pablo, Mandel, Healy and Cannon—were unable to correct this perspective and re-elaborate the programme to take account of these developments. Instead they revised both. The perspective was turned into a blinkered catastrophism. The programme of Trotskyism was liquidated and replaced by a systematic accommodation to Stalinism, social democracy and petit bourgeois/bourgeois nationalism.

The IC revolt against 'Pabloism' was fatally flawed because it built into its foundations acceptance of the 1951 positions viz a viz Stalinism and the other hostile class forces, and because the SWP led IC deserted the FI before its Fourth Congress. Subsequently, it failed to deepen its critique into a revolutionary one. It rested content with attacking 'Pabloism'. It did not re-constitute a democratic centralist Trotskyist international counterposed to Pablo and Mandel's pseudo-Fourth International. The thread of revolutionary continuity has been broken. The FI no longer exists and has not existed for over a third of a century. We reject the view that it exists like some mystical essence around its fragments or that today's warring centrist federations constitute a 'family of Trotskyism' or a 'world Trotskyist movement'. Likewise we reject the national isolationist notion (SWP-GB) that the FI should not have been built or was a wild gamble, and that internationals can only be built by federating 'strong national sections'. In the question of the international as in the question of parties 'PROGRAMME FIRST!' An international 'world party of social revolution' must, and in our epoch can only, be built on the basis of a fully operative international programme. It is in the fight to develop such a programme and win the masses to it that the necessary leadership (national and international) will be forged. Such a leadership is essential for the founding of a democratic centralist revolutionary international.

We fight to refound a fully Leninist and Trotskyist international on such a basis. We seek to win all those who recognise the necessity for this task from the ranks of the centrist, pseudo-Trotskyist organisations and, indeed, we seek to win organisations themselves, especially those which have waged and are waging a principled fight against the centristism of Pablo, Mandel, Healy, Lambert, Moreno, Lora, Perera, Cliff, Grant etc. We do not reject—indeed



we fight for—open, non-exclusionist conferences on a national, continental and world basis to discuss the degeneration and disintegration of the FI since the early 1950's. All subjectively revolutionary elements in the centrist organisations should support the call for an *open* world conference in 1987 or 1988. It is in this way, and not by stitching together another rotten bloc, that a step can be taken to overcoming the isolation and fragmentation

that these subjectively revolutionary elements find themselves in. In such conferences the organisations named below will fight for:

- A newly elaborated transitional programme of world revolution!
- Forward to the refoundation of a Leninist Trotskyist International!

April 1987

