

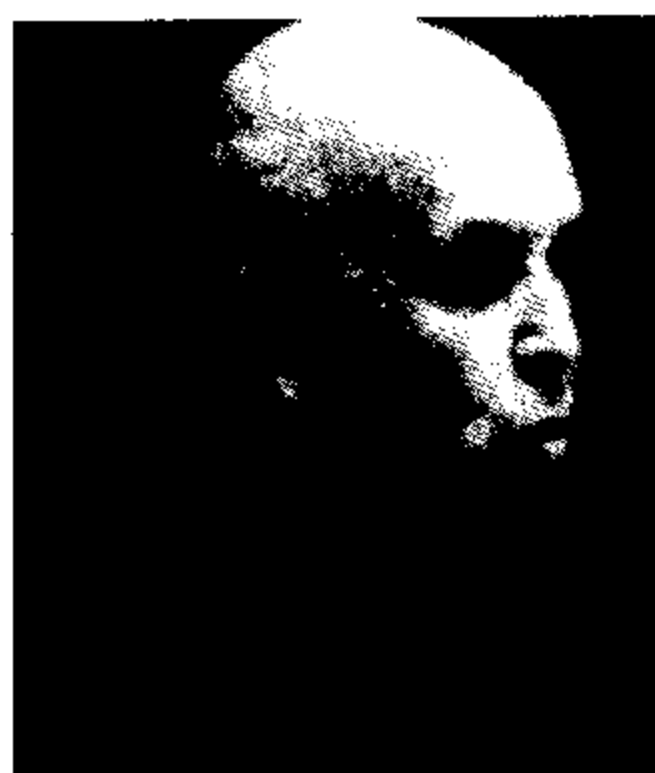
# workers power

March 1986

## Theoretical Supplement

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# THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE



Pablo

## No Alternative To 'Pabloism'

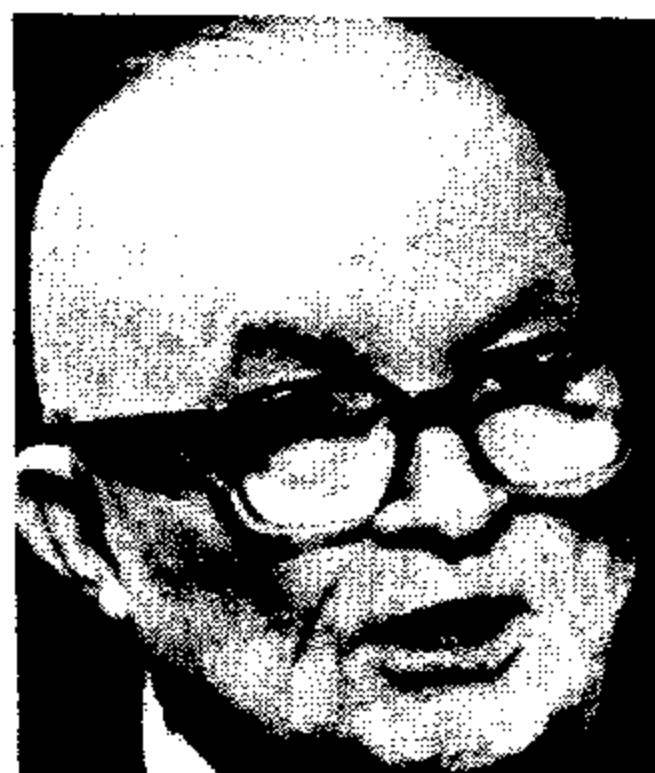
by Mark Hoskisson



Cannon



Lambert



Healy

THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY Party has followed up its expulsion of G. Healy by breaking with the "International Committee of the Fourth International" after the latter had suspended the WRP. The IC groupings, especially Dave North's Workers League (US), could not go along with the denunciation of Healy's frame-up campaign against the late Joseph Hansen and the leadership of the SWP (US). They had sunk too much of their moral and political capital in this repulsive slander campaign to be able to extricate themselves from it. In addition they were up to their necks in law suits arising from the issue.

The Workers Press has opened a discussion on the question of the International Committee. Contributions from two senior participants in the IC's history Mike Banda and Bill Hunter (W. Sinclair) have raised fundamental questions about the IC but in our opinion they have not given the WRP members any answers. Mike Banda's "Twenty-Seven Reasons why the IC should be buried and the FI built" takes the most 'radical' swing at the IC tradition and in doing so virtually writes off the history of the FI since 1938. Banda regards the FI as stillborn, puts the blame for its degeneration fully on James P Cannon's shoulders, accuses the SWP of a 'semi-defencist' position on the Second World War and a consistent Stalin-phobia.

In response to Banda's onslaught Bill Hunter has written "Mike Banda and the Bad Men Theory of History", defending Cannon against the charge of Stalinophobia. Now while this defence is largely accurate it centres on a secondary question. Banda's more important charge, that Cannon abandoned defeatism, is not rebutted by Hunter. He argues in relation to Cannon's **Socialism on Trial**:

"I think we will find that, in respect of war, all Cannon's testimony is based on Trotsky's articles."

This is not at all true. Cannon utilised only the tactical compromise involved in Trotsky's military policy. He did not situate it in the context of Trotsky's strategic position of revolutionary defeatism, of the main enemy being at home. Proof of this charge exists in **Socialism on Trial**:

"Q. Is it true that the party (SWP - Eds) is as equally opposed to Hitler as it is to the capitalist claims of the United States?"

A. That is unanswerable. We consider Hitler and Hitlerism the greatest enemy to mankind." (our emphasis)

This is a clear departure from revolutionary defeatism and the principle that the "main enemy is in your own country". It was a serious concession to "democratic" US imperialism which Cannon justified (in his debate with Munis) as a pedagogic adaptation to the consciousness of the US workers. But Cannon and the SWP did not collapse into social patriotism.

As we have pointed out in our book **The Death Agony of the Fourth International** the SWP's left-centrist waverings were not unique - far from it. Yet in our view the FI groups emerged from the Second World War weakened but not politically dead. Indeed the re-constructed FI remained up to 1948 the only revolutionary tendency on the planet.

The 1944 "Theses on the Liquidation of World War II and the Revolutionary Upsurge" charted a revolutionary policy of combat against the Stalinist and social-democratic counter-revolutionary forces trying to strangle this upsurge. The FI called for the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war, for the utilisation of democratic slogans and transitional demands "to advance the struggle for soviets and for power". It stood resolutely against the tide of anti-German chauvinism whipped up by the Allies and their 'socialists' and 'communists'.

In short we believe that in the years 1944-48 the FI repeatedly manifested the potential for a thoroughgoing political regeneration. At the Second Congress in 1948 the FI came out clearly for revolutionary parties and proletarian revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. It characterised all the Stalinist parties as counter-revolutionary. The problem for the FI was twofold. Could it re-adjust its perspectives to the triumph

and stabilisation of democratic imperialism and Stalinism and could it analyse correctly the overthrow of capitalist property relations by the USSR in Eastern Europe and by national Stalinist parties first in Yugoslavia and then in China? To do this meant creatively re-elaborating Trotsky's perspective and Transitional Programme - developing both on the basis of Trotsky's method.

Cannon, Pablo, Mandel, Healy and Hansen all failed to do this. A confused discussion erupted in the FI which the most consistent revisionists won. Pablo and Hansen dragged the hesitant and suspicious Cannon and Mandel into a fully centrist position - embodied in the documents of the Third World Congress (1951). Cannon proved himself merely a dogmatist with regard to Trotsky's perspectives and programme and Mandel, in the final analysis, revealed himself to be a very clever scholastic. When 'reality' (the Stalinist overturn) contradicted their dogma and scholastic resistance to Pablo they collapsed before it. Pablo's 'success' gave him the brief to 're-arm' the FI with a centrist programme and perspectives.

The Tito-Stalin split shortly after the Second World Congress triggered the programmatic revisions that the fake perspectives had always threatened to bring about. Having converted Trotsky's perspective of Stalinism's imminent demise, as if it were a programmatic truth, the Yugoslav events were seized upon as confirmation of this perspective. Stalinism's essential social patriotic nature - and therefore its tendency to fragment along national lines - was entirely forgotten. A break with the Kremlin was therefore hailed as a break with Stalinism. While the FI debated whether Yugoslavia was yet a workers' state all the FI's leaders agreed that Tito had broken from Stalinism - under the pressure of the masses - and was some sort of centrist. Pablo pushed the more hesitant leaders to the conclusion that Yugoslavia was a more or less healthy workers state - not in need of political revolution or a Trotskyist party distinct from the YCP. The latter and its leaders could be won to the FI. Pablo generalised the Yugoslav 'experience' at the Third Congress to other communist parties, drawing revisionist conclusions about Stalinism.

### While the FI debated whether Yugoslavia was yet a workers' state all the FI's leaders agreed that Tito had broken with Stalinism - under the pressure of the masses - and was some sort of centrist.

In order to understand the scale of revision that the entire FI sanctioned it is necessary to re-state the key elements of the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism and programmatic challenge to it.

Stalinism possesses a counterrevolutionary reformist programme expressing the world view of a bureaucracy that has usurped power from the proletariat. Its essential politics are those of 'peaceful coexistence' with capitalism; a strategic commitment to a 'democratic' national revolutionary stage prior to a later 'socialist' stage; and popular front alliances that tie the working class to supposedly 'progressive' sections of the bourgeoisie.

The working class has paid with its blood for this counterrevolutionary programme. In the states where the bureaucracy rules its power has been maintained by the systematic persecution of the proletariat's revolutionary vanguard. Elsewhere Stalinism has repeatedly led the struggles of the working class to physical annihilation at the hands of fascists and bourgeois nationalists.

Within the workers' state the Stalinist bureaucracy consciously blocks the transition to socialism by buttres-

sing its own privileges and depriving the working class of political power. It repeatedly obstructs the international expansion of the revolution. It seeks to subordinate class and anti-imperialist struggles to its own self-preservation. The Stalinist parties are strategically committed to class collaboration and submission to the bourgeoisie.

However, the specific contradictory character of Stalinism is given by its material base in a series of bureaucracies whose power and privileges rest on post-capitalist property relations. Whatever the class collaborationist intentions of the Stalinists this fact places the bureaucracy under permanent threat from imperialism against which, in defending itself, the bureaucracy is forced to defend historic gains. It is even occasionally obliged to mobilise or support anti-imperialist or class struggles in its defence.

Usually these mobilisations are restricted within bourgeois limits. However the particular circumstance of an extremely powerful dynamic within an anti-imperialist struggle and weaknesses on the part of imperialism can result in the overturn of capitalist property relations and the creation of a degenerate workers state. China and Yugoslavia demonstrate this.

That workers state will be qualitatively identical to the USSR and therefore degenerate from birth. But this does not necessarily mean that it will be permanently subordinated to the Soviet bureaucracy. The fragmentation of world Stalinism has seen Stalinist bureaucracies with their own national material base and particular mechanisms of international class collaboration break with the Kremlin without breaking with Stalinism in any fundamental sense. Once again China and Yugoslavia are the key examples.

Stalinism's lack of an internationalist perspective gives it an inherent tendency to fissure along national lines and enter into sharp conflicts with its fellow bureaucracies in other degenerate workers' states (up to and including armed conflict).

Even when Stalinism does overturn capitalist property relations or defends such an over-turn it does so in a manner that is counter-revolutionary from the vantage point of the transition to socialism and the internationalisation of the revolution. In the USSR it deprived the working class of political power. Elsewhere it politically expropriated the working class prior to over throwing capitalism. This was the case throughout Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba. The Stalinist bureaucracy at every stage savagely persecutes the revolutionary vanguard.

Revolutionary Marxists must recognise the highly contradictory character of Stalinism. It is committed to class collaboration with capitalism yet to that very end is forced to defend, and even extend, post-capitalist property relations in order to defend itself. For that reason we must reject unmarxist characterisations of Stalinism as being simply counter-revolutionary or 'counter-revolutionary through and through'. However we must not artificially separate Stalinism's class collaborationist and 'bad' acts from its progressive acts. On all occasions the predominant character of Stalinism is counter-revolutionary.

Only a political revolution - whereby the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party, establishes or re-establishes the rule of the soviets - can smash this bureaucracy and open the road to socialist construction and world revolution.

Trotskyism, and the Fourth International came into existence as the extension of Marxism and Leninism to combat the degenerative process afflicting the world's first workers' state. The post-war Fourth International was unable to develop its analysis and programme on the expansion of Stalinism. Collapsing into centrist fragments it has oscillated between Stalinophile and Stalinophobe positions. In the late 1940s it was the former that was dominant. The Third Congress documents on Stalinism stated:

"We have made clear that the CP's are not exactly reformist parties and that under certain exceptional conditions they possess the possibility of projecting a revolutionary orientation." (Fourth International November/December 1951)

The Trotskyist position on Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary force within the workers' movement was unceremoniously junked. The programmatic consequence was the abandonment of the call for political revolution. As the Third Congress resolution stated:

**"In Yugoslavia, the first country where the proletariat took power since the degeneration of the USSR, Stalinism no longer exists today as an effective factor in the workers' movement, which, however, does not exclude its possible re-emergence under certain conditions." (Class, Party and State in the East European Revolution)**

Mao's China was soon to be added to Yugoslavia to buttress this perspective. Pablo's triumph was complete. No section voted against him. After the Congress he rapidly developed the tactical and organisational conclusions flowing from his programmatic revision - 'entrism sub-generis' within social democracy, Stalinism and in the semi-colonial world, within petit-bourgeois nationalism. Trotsky's guidelines and norms for the entry tactic were explicitly rejected. This liquidationism met no serious opposition until it clashed with the national perspectives of the majority leadership of the French PCI.

## The 1953 Split

They did criticise aspects of Pablo's politics as early as 1951, but not from a revolutionary standpoint. Mandel tricked the leaders of the PCI into delaying the publication of their document, *Where is Comrade Pablo Going?*, in 1951. But this document merely criticised Pablo for failing, at this point, to recognise that it was not a Stalinist CP that was victorious in China:

**"In any event, it is absurd to speak of a Stalinist party in China." (International Committee Documents 1951-54 Vol.1)**

Where Pablo was beginning to emphasise the revolutionary possibilities of Stalinism itself, the French insisted that the party had broken with Stalinism. Their fear was that Pablo's enthusiasm for Stalinism would, as indeed it did, lead him to argue for entry of the PCI into the French Stalinist party. It was over this issue that they eventually split with Pablo - only to be severely attacked by Cannon for doing so. Moreover, Healy actually blamed the PCI for putting Pablo under pressure that was leading him to make what Healy regarded as organisational errors. Healy wrote:

**"Pablo suffers badly from isolation in Paris. That French movement is a 'killer'." (Trotskyism versus Revisionism Vol.1)**

The French opposition to Pablo only came into favour with Cannon and Healy when they themselves in 1953 moved into opposition to Pablo over his factional interventions within their organisations.

It is important to analyse the IC in the context of the FI's actual degeneration into centrism from 1948-51. Unless this is done then merely the fact of the IC's opposition to Pablo rather than the political content of their opposition can lead to a false belief that the IC was at some stage a revolutionary opposition at best, a lesser evil at worst, to Pablo, Mandel and their International Secretariat (ISFI).

Mike Banda leaps over this period thus avoiding the collapse of the FI. Bill Hunter does not deal with it at all, but does hint that the WRP needs to be positive about the IC tradition. Our own view is that the leaders of the IC - in particular Cannon and Healy - were complicit in the centrist degeneration of the FI from 1948-1951. They compounded that by blocking with Pablo from 1951 until 1953. Their eventual opposition to the IS did retrospectively include certain valid criticisms and correct positions which we would stand by. However, they never



to and goat

corrected or even questioned their complicity in the 1948 to 1951 period. They built the errors of that period into their respective politics - as we shall see. They never constituted a revolutionary alternative to Pablo.

The split in the FI in 1953 was ill-prepared, an organisational fiasco and politically reduced to a series of questions about the immediate events of the class struggle, rather than about the FI's strategic errors. The timing of the split was a product of the SWP's narrow factional interests in their struggle with the Pablo sponsored Cochran-Clarke faction in their ranks. Healy willingly assented to the split because of the organisational difficulties he was having with Pablo's agent, John Lawrence, in "the Club" and on the editorial board of *Socialist Outlook*. The PCI had already had Pablo bureaucratically replace the critical majority leadership around Bleibtreu-Favre with his agent Michel Mestre. In the split these organisational considerations were paramount. This is testified to by the fact that until the SWP's 'Open Letter' denouncing the secret cult of Pablo (!) neither they nor the British had published a single document critical of Pablo's line since 1951. The 'Open Letter' came like a bolt from the blue and confused the world movement. It certainly did not rally the majority of the FI to a fight against Pablo. In fact it is worth remembering that the 'Open Letter' was issued in November 1953. That very September Cannon wrote to Healy:

**"We are not so apprehensive about a possible 'crisis' over this question in the International movement, and we are not even thinking of a split." (Trotskyism versus Revisionism Volume 1)**

This is not surprising. The SWP and Healy actually agreed with the substance of Pablo's positions. In response to Pablo's 1951 documents - the codification of the centrist politics that he won the FI to - the SWP Political Committee wrote:

**"With the above positions we are in complete agreement." (Trotskyism versus Revisionism Vol.1)**

They added a rider on Stalinist parties:

**"If such parties go along with the masses and begin to follow a revolutionary road this will inescapably lead to their break with the Kremlin and their independent evolution. Such parties can then no longer be considered as Stalinist, but will rather tend to be centrist in character, as has been the case with the Yugoslav CP." (Ibid)**

And of course as every Marxist knows centrist parties can be won to a revolutionary position. Thus the SWP encouraged Pablo's project of wooing Tito to the FI. Indeed when Cannon's closest co-thinker in Britain, Sam Gordon, criticised aspects of the 1951 documents Cannon was furious. Gordon rightly criticised their emphasis on the 'automatic process' - of revolution, of the decline of Stalinism. He cautiously suggested that this denigrated the role of revolutionary consciousness, that is, of the FI. Cannon responded sharply:

**"I was surprised and disappointed at your impulsive action in regard to the Third World Congress documents. We accepted them as they were written . . . we would be greatly pleased if you can see things this way and co-ordinate yourself with us accordingly." (Ibid)**

Unfortunately Sam Gordon yielded to Cannon's pressure, and the SWP split in 1953 still protesting its adherence to the centrist 1951 documents. The 'Open Letter' criticised Pablo's refusal to support the workers of East Germany in 1953 when they rose against the USSR. It derided Pablo's tendency to take the Soviet bureaucracy's liberalisation schemes as good coin. And on the French general strike it attacked Pablo's undoubted softness on the Stalinists. But that is all. Or rather apart from the good old demonology of the 'secret cult' of Pablo, that is all.

Yugoslavia and the FI's attitude towards Tito are not criticised. What is more, in the document that backed up the letter, *Against Pabloite Revisionism*, Mao and the Chinese Stalinists are blithely referred to as 'the Asian revolutionists'. The French were quick to echo this view in their document *The Successive Stages of Pabloite Revisionism*. Worse the Chinese Trotskyists' justified fears with regard to Mao and their refusal to simply enter the CCI were stigmatised as 'sectarian errors'.

In Britain the 'fight' against Pabloism was of a piece with that in the USA. Healy had a long history as Pablo's man. With Pablo's backing he broke up the RCP. With Pablo and Cannon's assistance he bureaucratically gained a majority in a manner that foreshadowed the treatment of the PCI in France. When Ted Grant and Tony Cliff took cognizance of the clear signs of a developing boom Healy accused them of calling:

**"... for a complete revision of our programmatic estimation of capitalism. It means that capitalism in Britain is becoming more virile - something which is obvious nonsense." (Quoted in British Trotskyism, by John Callaghan)**

Here we can clearly see Healy's tendency to confuse perspectives (held to dogmatically) with programme (which he was absolutely light-minded about). Moreover from this one-sided insistence on crisis he drew politically alarmist conclusions. Healy insisted that the Tories had abandoned all hope of winning any more elections and were turning 'towards extra-parliamentary measures' (ibid).

Healy's catastrophism was learnt at Pablo's knee. Not for him Trotsky's revolutionary realism - a recognition that so long as capitalism survives it will be subject to booms as well as slumps and that Marxists have to use their programme and their tactics in all circumstances. The impending crisis is left to accomplish the tasks revolutionaries should be taking up. The shattering of democratic illusions is left to the Bonapartist actions of the ruling class. The crisis will shatter the hold of reformism. Thus Healy can bide his time, carrying out 'deep entry', posing politically as a 'centrist' Bevanite whilst waiting for the catastrophe.

In the name of this sort of perspective Healy and Pablo broke up the RCP - the only unified revolutionary organisation to have existed in Britain since the early 1930s. This piece of political vandalism was Healy's first major 'crime' and one that should not be forgotten.

Healy was amongst Pablo's greatest fans. As late

as May 1953 he was still hoping against hope that a political break with Pablo could be avoided. Amongst his praises were such gems as:

**"He (Pablo - Eds) has done a remarkable job and right now he needs our help . . . This man wants to do the right thing - of that I am sure, but right now only a strong political line can make him see reason." (Trotskyism versus Revisionism Vol.1)**

At this point the only 'political line' that Healy and Cannon were looking for a change in was that Pablo should abandon factionalising within their sections.

Even several years later Healy was still unable to see much wrong with the way Pablo had politically led the FI up to 1951. In 1956 he wrote:

**"Pablo wrote 95% of the 3rd World Congress resolutions in a way which won our applause, but it was the 5% which had the sting in the tail." (How Healy and Pablo Blocked Reunification, Education for Socialists)**

It is interesting to note that whilst the French PCI and the American SWP did contribute analyses and documents to the struggle with Pablo the British did not. Indeed their journal *Labour Review*, which began life in 1952 does not contain a single reference to the FI or the IC until the summer of 1959 (Vol.4 No.2). *Trotskyism versus Revisionism* reveals this paucity of political documentation on a crucial event in Trotskyism's history very clearly. All we get are Healy's private letters to the SWP leaders and an account of Lawrence and Healy's sordid - and sometimes violent - struggles in and over the print shop.

In the light of all this we see no reason to change our estimate of the IC, at the time of the 1953 split, from that contained in our book *The Death Agony of the Fourth International, and the Tasks of Trotskyists Today*:

**"The principle forces who organised the 1953 split with the Pablo-led IS - the SWP(US), the PCI (France) and the Healy group in Britain were not a revolutionary 'Left Opposition'. The International Committee (IC) that they formed does not constitute a 'continuity' of Trotskyism as against Pabloite revisionism. They failed to break decisively with the liquidationist positions of the 1951 Congress which paved the way for Pablo's tactical turns. They did not criticise (i.e. including self-criticism) the post-war reconstruction of the FI and the undermining of Trotsky's programme and method that this involved.**

The IC embodied the national isolationism of its three largest components, each of which only opposed Pablo's bureaucratically centralised drive to implement the perspectives of the 1951 Congress when it affected them. In the IC itself they rejected democratic centralism outright. Moreover, by not going beyond the framework of a public faction, they refused to wage an intransigent fight against Pablo-Mandel.

"The split of 1953 therefore, was both too late and too early. Politically it was too late because all the IC groups had already endorsed and re-endorsed the liquidation of the line in the period 1948-51. It was too early in the sense that it came before any fight within the framework of the FI to win a majority at the following congress. Indeed, the decision to move straight to a split pre-empted such a fight. The IC groupings had no distinct and thoroughgoing political alternative to Pablo-Mandel and, therefore, they remained immobilised in a position where factional heat was a substitute for political light.

Developments within the IC after 1953 confirm this analysis. The 'Open Letter' declared:

**"The lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organisationally."**

Yet seven months later Cannon was back on the road to unity with the IS. He wrote to Leslie Goonewardene of the Ceylonese LSSP that:

**"Even with good will for formal re-unification, there is no certainty that it can be re-established. But, in my opinion, there is still a chance - if your proposal for postponement of the Congress is eventually accepted." (Trotskyism versus Revisionism Volume 2)**

## 'Under A Stolen Flag'

Despite Pablo's revisionism Cannon will consider unity if an organisational concession (the postponement of a congress) is met. This speaks volumes for the attitude of the IC to the political questions involved in the split. Indeed, from 1954 on the SWP ceased any form of polemic with the IS. This was a signal to the critical elements within the International Secretariat's grouping that the SWP was not serious about the split. If a speedy re-unification was possible given only organisational concessions why on earth should the LSSP, or the Italians risk a break with Pablo or join the IC. That the IC continued to exist had far more to do with Pablo's intransigence than Cannon and his co-thinkers.

An underlying cause of the IC's immobility and even enthusiasm for re-unification was the desertion of the International Secretariat by Pablo's factional agents - Clarke, Lawrence and Mestre at the 'Fourth' World Congress. This removed the most hateful obstacles to re-unification to Cannon, Healy and PCI leader Lambert. On the other hand they were left disarmed when Pablo failed to liquidate the FI - i.e. to organisationally dissolve the central organs or the sections into the Stalinist



Revolutionary Hungarian workers topple Stalin's revolting statue

movement. Pablo accepted 'orthodox' amendments from the LSSP in the 1954 Congress, drawing back from the most extreme Stalinophile formulations and policies towards the 1951 positions where it was difficult for the IC to attack them.

The Hungarian and Polish risings against the Kremlin and the development of 'national' Stalinists like Nagy and Gomulka doused Pablo's enthusiasm for self-reforming Stalinism and strengthened the hand of Mandel whose inclination in the aftermath of Khrushchev's secret speech was to adapt to 'anti-Stalinist' forces within the Stalinist camp. Between 1954 and 1956 the IC was dormant as an international body. It had no conferences, no common political platform and certainly no pretence at democratic centralism. However, the revolutionary events in Eastern Europe in 1956 and the subsequent unity offensive by the ISFI stirred the IC into a degree of activity. In November 1956 the Pablo-led International Executive Committee (IEC) sent out a call for unity. Cannon declared to the SWP Political Committee in March 1957:

"... the Pabloite line on all the big events and developments of the past year has been very similar to ours. It would be absurd for us to deny or ignore these important facts and to refuse to recognize they constitute a number of the most important pre-requisites for unification." (How Healy and Pablo Blocked Re-unification).

The SWP pursued this line and began to make specific proposals for unity. These proposals did not centre on any political issues that remained to be thrashed out. On the contrary they were a series of elaborate organisational proposals aimed at ensuring parity on leading committees and non-interference by the International into the affairs of national sections. It is no surprise, therefore, that the SWP were extremely annoyed when the Healy group jeopardised the organisational manoeuvre by publishing W. Sinclair's (Bill Hunter) *Under a Stolen Flag* (May 1957). The SWP did not know of Hunter's document until they received a copy from none other than Pablo! Lenin and Trotsky rejected the idea of the international as a mail box for the national sections. It seems that the IC was not even a mail box! The document had been sent to a Ceylonese contact of the IC who had promptly passed it on to the International Secretariat. An angry Jim Cannon wrote to Healy in July 1957:

"Our opinion out here is that you made a mistake in accepting the Germain thesis (Mandel's document *The Decline and Fall of Stalinism* - Eds) as the central point of discussion... Moreover, it is our opinion out here in Los Angeles that Sinclair made an extremely exaggerated criticism of the Germain document, misinterpreted it in some respects and in other respects even appears to have misrepresented it." (Ibid)

In fact *Under a Stolen Flag* was the first and certainly the best contribution made by the British to the analysis of the FI's degeneration. It mounts an effective attack on the notion that the *Decline and Fall of Stalinism* (1957) represents and advances over the *Rise and Decline of Stalinism* (1953). This was precisely the claim being made by the SWP as a justification for the unity perspective. Hunter admirably attacked the earlier Pablo notion of a self-reforming bureaucracy (via its Liberal wing) and showed how the mere use of the term 'political revolution' after 1956 marked no qualitative change, since the IS still looked to Nagy and Gomulka to carry forward this process. He showed that 'political revolution' for Mandel, Pablo, et al really meant an 'evolution towards democratisation'. He specified the characteristics of this approach to political revolution. "It is a process. More it is an irresistible process". It is "a disembodied 'revolution' separate from its content

of mass action". (Trotskyism Versus Revisionism Volume 3)

Hunter showed how this worship of the objective process and this turning of revolution into a sort of moving spirit absolves revolutionaries from party-building and active intervention, turning them instead into passive commentators:

"History grinds onwards, irresistibly to its predetermined goal. And the role of the advance guard, the conscious revolutionary force? ... to persuade the Soviet bureaucrats not to resist the laws of history." (Ibid)

*Under a Stolen Flag* certainly constitutes an attempt to mount a critique of 'Pabloism' which goes beyond the organisational issues of the 1953 split. It was a product of the left turn of the British section in the post-1956 period. Yet it did not complete its analysis of the degenerative process within the FI. Hunter points to the period of the Cold War (1947-1953) as the period of Pablo's ascendancy in which he:

"under combined pressures of European Stalinism and world imperialism began to revise and reject the fundamental principles, criteria and method of analysis of the Trotskyist Movement." (Ibid)

He puts this down to a pessimistic world perspective. Based on an imminent and inevitable world war, the lack of time to build parties and the incapacity of the proletariat to break from Stalinism, Pablo believed the world war would turn into an international civil war. The Stalinist Parties would turn to the left and would carry out a roughly revolutionary line. The resulting workers' states might be deformed and take centuries to bring up to full proletarian democracy. Now whilst this is a correct description of Pablo's perspective in the late 1940s and early 1950s it does not go to the root of the question of the nature of the Stalinist led overturn and how the programme of social and political revolution can be fought for within them. Nowhere does Hunter criticise or correct the FI's position on Yugoslavia. Indeed he effectively endorses this when he says:

"Unlike the Yugoslav CP, however, the Chinese CP leadership has attempted - up to the present - to maintain its differences with the Soviet bureaucracy within the framework of an unprincipled alliance." (Ibid)

But the "pressure of the revolutionary working class of China" (Ibid), was causing the bureaucracy to re-think its position. Hunter maintains that a Chinese section of the FI is necessary but does not make it clear that its tasks are those of the political revolution. The echo of 1951 still rings in Hunter's work. The possibility of the Chinese CP breaking from Stalinism by virtue of a break with the Kremlin under the pressure of the masses is entertained. Hunter's views on China were expressed publicly by Mike Banda in *Labour Review* in 1957. He wrote:

"... without ever realising the far-reaching manifestations of their historic victory, the Chinese Communist leaders helped to undermine the ideological and material basis of Stalinism." (LR Vol.2 No.2)

It was positions such as this that paved the way for Healy's later enthusiasm for the Mao wing of the CCP during the cultural revolution. The failure to completely break with the 1951 positions on Stalinism was decisive.

It was not only with regard to China that such errors were made. In late 1957 a *Labour Review* editorial argued:

"No-one would wish to belittle for a second the contributions of the Yugoslavs and the Poles to the fight against Stalinism in the international labour movement; but recent events have shown that centrist politics (for that is what Gomulka and Tito practise) lead inevitably back to the blind alley of Stalin-

ism. Stalinism ... is a special form of centrism." (LR Vol.2 No.6)

Trotsky broke with such a definition of Stalinism in the 1930s and replaced it with the characterisation counter-revolutionary, something quite distinct from centrist. In the light of all this we would characterise Hunter's critique of Pabloism as correct in many respects, but flawed and still essentially on the terrain of left centrism because of its failure to come to terms with the 1948-51 revisions of Marxism carried out by the FI.

There can be no denying that the British response to the 1957 unity-mongering was to the left of the SWP's. But the very fact of this difference underlines the absence of a common IC position. It re-affirms our view that there is no such thing as an 'IC tradition'. Ironically Healy's own letters from the period confirm this absolutely. He was insistent that the IC lacked political cohesion. He wrote to Cannon in June 1956 (almost 3 years after the IC had been formed):

"The urgent thing is for our International Committee to adopt a clear political line." (How Healy and Pablo Blocked Re-unification)

He also came close to arguing for the rejection of the 1951 Congress positions. He wrote that the IC had failed "to appreciate the thoroughly revisionist character of the Third World Congress." (Ibid)

However, neither Healy nor Hunter carried this re-evaluation of the Third Congress any further. They were still, at that point, subservient to the SWP and, albeit reluctantly, went along with the SWP's unity dance with Pablo and Mandel. Furthermore the British Section's opposition to Pablo was marred by their continued embrace of deep entryism, or "entryism sui generis" as Pablo called it. They were particularly worried because Pablo had enlisted Ted Grant's small Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) as his British section.

Friction between Grant and Healy went back to the struggle in the RCP over entry. Grant's RSL was still pursuing an 'open' policy, as against Healy. This led Healy to fear the organisational consequences of a re-unification even though politically, on the question of entry, Healy stood closer to Pablo! On entryism Pablo had written that events had provided "a brilliant justification of our 'entryist' tactics" (How Healy and Pablo Blocked Re-unification). On the same question Healy wrote to the IS in July 1957:

"The Grant group are in favour of the ex-RCP policy of 'open work' and we, for our part, have no desire to resume the old divisions of the forties." (Ibid)

Prominent in Healy's calculations, therefore, were purely factional and organisational considerations since on the key tactical questions of the day he and Pablo remained in agreement.

## The IC And Algeria

The other prominent section of the IC, the French PCI played only a minor role within the forces of "Orthodox Trotskyism" after 1953. Perhaps this was because its principal leader Bleibtreu was expelled within a year by the redoubtable Pierre Lambert for reasons Healy and Cannon were deeply suspicious of.

Both, privately, accused Lambert of sectarianism and proposed to investigate the expulsion. He called their bluff by threatening to take the PCI out of the IC invoking the non-interference clause on which the latter was founded. By the mid-1950s developments in the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria prompted Lambert to urge the IC into a disastrous course which further undermined its prestige. He wanted to give privileged support to one wing of the national liberation forces, the MNA led by Messali Hadj and to condemn the Ben Bella-led FLN.

The position of revolutionaries on such questions is clear - we support all those nationalists genuinely fighting imperialism. Supporting only the MNA was wrong. This error, bad enough, was compounded by describing the MNA as a proletarian movement that could, and would, evolve into a socialist party. Mike Banda, in an article which he now repudiates, wrote:

"Whereas the FLN in its social composition and its programme is predominantly petty bourgeois, the MNA, because of its overwhelming proletarian composition and its long traditions of struggle, is, though not a socialist party, the precursor of a revolutionary socialist party." (LR Vol.3 No.2)

Now while it is good that Mike Banda disavows this position, the lessons of the error need to be learnt. Support for the MNA in France served Lambert's factional purposes against the Pabloites. Mandel has alleged that Lambert actually received money from Hadj. If this is true then for sordid organisational gain the IC abandoned permanent revolution and scabbled on the struggle being waged by the FLN.

They excused the quising machinations of the MNA with French imperialism and only changed their position after Hadj welcomed de Gaulle's accession to power in 1958 as a semi-Bonaparte and openly betrayed the Algerian revolution.

This aspect of "the IC tradition" was repeated in all its essentials by Healy in relation to Libya, Iraq, Iran and the PLO. It is a political question. Mike Banda says he was forced to write the article we have quoted by a 20-1 vote. Regardless of this the position of the Healy group in this crucial colonial revolution was no better politically speaking, to Pablo's grovelling before Ben Bella. It was an element of an overall political outlook that kept the left-centrist opposition to Pablo over Stalinism in check, prevented the Healy group developing

in a revolutionary direction and confirmed the bankruptcy of the so-called IC tradition.

Pablo's organisational intransigence in refusing parity to the IC scuppered the first attempt at reunification. And although they sent Farrell Dobbs to the IC's first ever conference in Britain in 1958, the SWP had, in effect, given notice that no political issues separated them from the IS. With the Cuban revolution in 1959, and the imprisonment of Pablo in the early 1960s, the political convergence was speeded up and the principal organisational barrier to unity (Pablo the demon!) was temporarily removed. The process that led to the formation of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) in 1963 was begun. Thereafter the SLL and the Lambert group were the only major forces left in the IC. Following the Japanese section's earlier example, the SWP forgot its 'cleavage' with Pabloism and decamped into the ISFI, to turn it into the USFI.

The events of 1957 had had the opposite effect on the British and French, to that of the Americans. It hardened their factional resolve.

## Confusion On Cuba

The formation of the SLL in Britain in 1959 had given the British section a solidity it had previously lacked. Its cadre in general, and Healy in particular, felt able to take a stand on international questions independently of the SWP. Subservience to Cannon was no longer Healy's automatic response with regard to the problems of the FI. This was reflected in a 1959 editorial, "In Defence of Trotskyism" in *Labour Review*. Fully aware that Cannon, Hansen, Dobbs and co were moving closer to the ISFI by the day this article attempted to outflank the unity mongers by repeating the SWP's own sentiments in 1953:

"Between Pabloism and the Marxist ideas which guide the practical activity of the Socialist Labour League there lies an unbridgeable gulf. The Marxist cadre of the future cannot emerge without a constant struggle against Pabloism." (LR Vol.4 No.2)

The SWP, themselves primarily interested in their national problems, paid little heed to what were, in fact, coded warnings from the SLL. With Castro's victory in early 1959 - a revolution in the Americas - the SWP moved with breakneck speed towards a rapprochement. In 1960 Joseph Hansen stepped forth as the theoretician of the SWP to explain the evolution of Castro into an unconscious Marxist and his Cuba as a workers' state which was neither degenerate nor deformed but "pretty good looking".

In fact Hansen was applying the same criteria to Cuba as the FI had done from 1948 on to Yugoslavia. Ergo, the call for political revolution and a Trotskyist party was dropped altogether. All of this was justified by the fact that Castro was not a Stalinist by origin but a revolutionary nationalist.

Hansen and Cannon's liquidationism produced an opposition within the SWP around Shane Mage, Tim Wohlforth and James Robertson, future leader of the Spartacists. While they correctly criticised the SWP leadership for abandoning the programme of Permanent Revolution, they fell into the fatal trap of putting a minus where Hansen put a plus.

Hansen's empiricism and liquidationist appetite had led him to register the fact, at the end of 1960, that capitalism had been overthrown in Cuba. The opposition refused to recognise this overturn, seeing this denial as the only barrier to Hansen's opportunist conclusions. Nevertheless they were unable to argue convincingly that it was still capitalist. As a result they developed the completely unMarxist notion of a "transitional state" which was neither capitalist nor proletarian in content! The opposition was soon split by Healy's man Wohlforth,



Castro and Hansen - spot the unconscious Stalinist

who rapidly abandoned his previous positions on Cuba and adopted those of the IC. Robertson, who soon recognised Cuba as a "deformed workers' state" never broke fundamentally with Mage's "transitional state" discovering instead a "petit bourgeois government" which had completely broken from its class moorings and become "autonomous from the bourgeois order".

This confusion arose from the question of the class character of Castro and the July 26th Movement. Hansen insisted that they were not Stalinists, indeed that they were proletarian revolutionaries, 'unconscious Trotskyists'. The non-Stalinist origins of most of the Castroites confused Hansen's opponents. It led Robertson and the Spartacists to give the petit-bourgeoisie as a class and its political representatives, a special role never before accepted by Marxists - that of creating a workers' state.

In fact a close examination of developments in Cuba would have revealed the transformation of the July 26th Movement from a popular front alliance of Stalinists, petit-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists into a Stalinist bureaucracy via a series of splits, through fusion with the Cuban Stalinist party and an alliance with the USSR.

Wohlforth had been groping towards an extension of the concept of "structural assimilation" which the post-war FI had discussed with regard to Eastern Europe. Its advantage would be that it would deny to Stalinism and to petit-bourgeois nationalism a revolution-making capability. It did however carry serious revisionist implications with regard to the Marxist theory of the state (that the same state machine could be passed from bourgeoisie to 'proletariat' without a process of 'smashing').

Also, since Cuba was far from contiguous with the USSR and the CPSU, and the Red Army could hardly be presented as carrying through the overturn, Wohlforth reached an impasse which he resolved by capitulating to Healy's simpler solution - Cuba was still capitalist!

Factional opposition to the SWP and an inability to present a Marxist answer to Hansen progressively blinded the British and French sections to the reality of Cuba. Healy recognised the clear convergence of the "Pabloite" IS with the SWP on the characterisation of the Cuban Revolution. Again where Hansen put a plus, it was necessary for Healy to put a minus to do battle against the fusion. While correctly attacking Hansen for his slavish capitulation before the Castroites, for abandoning the fight for a Trotskyist party, for workers' democracy, soviets, etc, they refused to recognise the overturn of capitalism in Cuba. Thus in 1962 they declared:

"In our opinion, the Castro regime remains a Bonapartist regime resting on capitalist foundations." (Trotskyism Versus Revisionism Volume 3)

This analysis was clung to by the Healyites over the next two and a half decades! In 1972 despite having recognised that Castro had "moved completely into the policy orbit of world Stalinism" (Perspectives of the IC's Fourth Congress) they still insisted that Cuba was not a workers state. Rather Castro was, "a Bonapartist caretaker for the Cuban bourgeoisie", who no doubt were merely on holiday in Florida!

Such a position was completely at variance with the analysis by the Fourth International, that the SLL had endorsed of Yugoslavia, China, etc a fact that Hansen was able to exploit to the full. The French section of the IC at least recognised this, and adopted a significantly different position to the SLL. While agreeing it was a capitalist state (albeit a 'phantom' one!) they were willing to declare it a "Workers and Peasants Government". Further they recognised that to do this meant revising the previous analysis of Eastern Europe, China, etc, and adopting a form of "structural assimilation" analysis. Thus the "added ingredient" was the proximity of the Soviet Union and the fact that these 'Bonapartist states' that emerged in the "buffer" zones could be seen as mere arms of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

The SLL however was stuck with justifying both the 1948-53 analysis and their characterisation of Cuba as capitalist, an untenable position which was resolved by a retreat into philosophy and "dialectics" whereby "facts" however awkward could be shown to be at variance with a higher "reality".

The international Spartacist tendency (IST), whose leaders were to be unceremoniously booted out of the IC's 1966 conference, argue that the SLL's opposition to the SWP proved that Healy had taken over from Cannon as the embodiment of the revolutionary continuity of Trotskyism. At least he was until he and Robertson fell out. Then this prestigious title - continuity - fell to him. The IST base this claim on an SLL document called "The World Prospect for Socialism". This was adopted, and subsequently amended, by the 1961 SLL conference. So impressed is the IST with this document that they have reprinted it as proof that the IC tradition was a healthy one up to the point of their own departure.

An analysis of this document, published originally in the Winter 1961 volume of *Labour Review*, proves the opposite of the Spartacist's contention. It proves that despite a reflex reaction against the SWP and ISFI, the SLL once again proved unable, and by now probably unwilling, to re-examine the political roots of the 1953 crisis.

This document which the IST say they stand by contains the one sided and partial definition of Stalinism as "the ideology and programme of the Soviet bureaucracy" (LR Vol.6 No.3). Thus the Yugoslav and Chinese parties can be defined as not Stalinist:

They remain centrist currents guided by their own immediate national interests . . . In China and Yugoslavia the bulwarks erected against the spread of revolution by International Stalinism were broken down by the elemental force of the popular revolutionary movement". (Ibid)

There is no essential difference between this analysis of the YCP and CCP and Pablo's. In the same document the usual catastrophism is mixed in with the belief that in Britain the traditional reformist leaderships "are being seriously challenged". While the SWP are mildly warned that "a diversion from the true course can creep up unsuspectingly" (ibid), no serious criticism of the SWP line on Cuba is included. And while Pabloism is castigated for its liquidationism via deep entryism into refor-



Hussein (above) and Gadaffi

mist parties there is no honest accounting of the Healy group's almost fifteen years spent deep inside the wards, the Bevanite circles and the Tribune forums.

As with "Under a Stolen Flag" there are positions within the 1961 document that revolutionaries can agree with. But, taken as a whole it clearly did not provide a rounded revolutionary alternative to the SWP/ISFI, still less to the USFI. On Stalinism it was wrong. On Britain it was catastrophist. On Cuba it was grossly inadequate. And on the history of "the Club" and the SLL in the Labour Party it was dishonestly silent.

## The Road To Infamy

By 1964 the IC had become a rump, an unprincipled coalition between the SLL undergoing an ultra-left phase, and Lambert's La Verite (later OCI) group which was embedded in the anti-communist Force Ouvriere union federation and showing signs of remarkable softness towards social democracy and Stalinophobia.

Throughout the second part of the 1960s, the SLL demonstrated time and again their bankruptcy on key questions of the international class struggle. This was to be revealed yet again by the SLL's response to the NLF offensive in Vietnam. Remembering the IC's 1954 resolution on Ho Chi Minh's victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu, which hailed this Stalinist uncritically, the SLL, speaking for the IC in 1968 wrote:

" . . . the Vietnamese people, led by Ho Chi Minh, today stand on the threshold of what certainly promises to be one of the most important victories of the anti-imperialist and socialist revolution . . . It demonstrates the transcendental power and resilience of a protracted people's war led and organized by a party based on the working class and poor peasantry . . . Vietnam is the revolution in permanence; Cuba is the revolution aborted." (Fourth International Vol.5 No.1)

Ho Chi Minh was a Stalinist. He led the Vietnamese Communist Party. His party butchered the leaders of the Vietnamese FI and helped abort the revolution in 1945 and 1954. Yet, here he is being lauded, just as Tito was, as a revolutionary hero.

Since the split with the OCI in 1971 (with the OCI going off to pursue a consistently rightist course in the OCRFI and now the FI-ICR), the IC has moved from the realm of sectarianism to the realm of infamy. On the Arab national question it has conveniently forgotten the struggle for "conscious leadership" and hailed Gadaffi, Arafat, Hussein, the butcher of the Iraqi CP, and Khom-eini.

In Poland it substituted a clear headed analysis of Solidarnosc's nature and the tactics needed towards it, with generalities about "the essence of its struggle is Trotskyism" (Fourth International, October 1982). Objectivism from Pablo's pen is reviled. But from the pen of the SLL/WRP it is good "Trotskyist coin".

Yet the later deviations were, as we have shown, not accidental. They were connected by an unbroken thread to the very origins of the IC. It is not a red thread of revolutionary continuity. Rather it is an unbroken chain of centrist errors dating back to the FI's collapse between 1948-51. Unless that is understood and unless the IC tradition is explained in these terms then the WRP of today - despite Banda's fulminations and Hunter's apologies - will not arm itself for a revolutionary future.