

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

WORLD CONGRESS



2025

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INTRODUCTION

The First World Congress of the Revolutionary Communist International will take place between 2-7 August 2025 in Italy, as well as being streamed online.

This is our highest democratic meeting, in which delegates will debate our outlook on the world political situation; draw the lessons from our work in the past period; and elect our leading bodies. We will also hold vital discussions on our own history, and the important work of our US comrades in the ‘belly of the beast!’

Since our previous congress in 2023, we have re-founded the International under a bold communist banner and made tremendous advances in many parts of the world.

Meanwhile, capitalism has been beset by a relentless succession of wars and economic upheavals. The rottenness and hypocrisy of the imperialists has been ruthlessly exposed by their ‘iron-clad’ support for catastrophes like the Ukraine war and Israel’s genocidal campaign against Gaza. Not to mention imposing austerity on the working class, while spending billions on arms.

Capitalism is a world system, and its crisis wreaks havoc across the globe. By the same token, the working class is an international

force, with a shared destiny and universal interests. Therefore, it is necessary to build an international organisation capable of galvanising the proletariat and fighting capitalism on the world stage.

In turbulent times such as these, with “the world turned upside down”, the tasks of the communists are posed sharply. Above all, the discussions at this Congress will highlight the immense power of Marxist theory as a tool for understanding the world, allowing us to orient and grow our forces so that we can intervene in the great events to come.

Given the great importance of this event, we appeal to all participating comrades to help us keep the political content of these discussions at the forefront, so we can raise the level of our entire organisation. Let’s make this our best congress ever!

Long live the RCI!

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Subject to change. All times are CEST.

Saturday 2 Aug:

- 9:00-13:00: World Perspectives: A world turned upside down
- 15:00-19:30: World Perspectives: A world turned upside down (cont)

Sunday 3 Aug:

- 9:00-13:00: World Perspectives: A world turned upside down (cont)
- 15:00-19:30: World Perspectives: A world turned upside down (cont)
- 21:00: Film Screening: 'The Communists Are Coming' – RCI documentary

Monday 4 Aug:

- 9:00-13:00: The collapse of the Fourth International: In defence of our heritage.
- 15:00-18:00: The collapse of the Fourth International: In defence of our heritage. (cont)
- 18:00-19:30: Financial collection.

Tuesday 5 Aug:

- 9:00-13:00: Revolutionary finance
- Free afternoon

Wednesday 6 Aug:

- 9:00-13:00: USA: Communism in the 'belly of the beast'
- 15:00-19:30: Building the revolutionary International
- 21.00: "Free our comrades!": Gilgit-Baltistan solidarity campaign report

Thursday 7 Aug:

- 9:00-13:00: Building the revolutionary International (cont)
- 15:00-19:00: Building the revolutionary International (cont)
- 19:00-19:30: Closing remarks

WORLD PERSPECTIVES — THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN: A SYSTEM IN CRISIS (IEC DRAFT)

1. We are living through a period of sharp turns and sudden changes in the world situation. The election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States and his policies have introduced enormous instability into world politics, the world economy and relations between the powers.
2. Trump has not caused this turmoil, which is the result of the crisis of capitalism, but his actions have enormously accelerated the process. Contradictions which had been building up under the surface for a long time have suddenly burst into the open, upsetting the whole situation. The so-called liberal world order, which had existed for decades, is now collapsing in front of our very eyes.
3. In analysing the world situation we need to start with the fundamentals. Capitalism is a system that has long outlived its historical role. In its epoch of decay it produces wars, crises and environmental destruction, which in the long run threatens the very existence of life on the planet. The purpose of this document is to outline the main features of this crisis and to stress the need to build a revolutionary organisation which can overthrow it, the only way to guarantee a future for humanity.
4. In the final analysis, the inability of the capitalist system to develop the productive forces is the cause of the crisis. The economy is hemmed in by the limits of the nation state and the private ownership of the means of production. For decades the capitalists have been using various methods to try to overcome these limitations: increasing liquidity, developing world trade, etc. All of these measures are now turning into their opposite.



5. THE ELECTION OF TRUMP

6. The election of Donald Trump in November 2024 represented a significant political shift, and a manifestation of the crisis of legitimacy of bourgeois democracy, which is not unique to the US but which exists in all countries. Despite extensive efforts by the main section of the US ruling class and establishment to prevent his victory, Trump secured a decisive win.
7. This result has been widely interpreted, particularly by liberal commentators, mainstream media, and sections of the 'left', as evidence of a broader rightward shift in US and global politics.
8. Such 'explanations' are superficial and misleading. Furthermore, they invite us to draw extremely dangerous conclusions. For instance, that Joe Biden and the Democrats somehow represent a more progressive and 'democratic' alternative – a claim that is in complete contradiction to the facts.
9. The Biden administration was completely reactionary, a fact that was especially clear in the realm of foreign policy. Let us recall that 'Genocide Joe' provided Netanyahu with a blank cheque to proceed with the mass slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza. He led a campaign of ferocious repression against students and others who dared to oppose this reactionary policy.
10. Similarly, in the case of Ukraine, he was responsible for deliberately provoking a conflict that has led to a bloody slaughter, handing over billions of dollars in cash and military aid to the reactionary regime in Kyiv, and engaging in a dangerous policy of provocation against Russia that brought the USA to the brink of World War Three.
11. In the election campaign, Trump positioned himself as the 'peace candidate', as opposed to the war-mongering policies of the Biden clique. This distinction was particularly influential among voters in districts with significant Muslim and Arab populations.
12. While it is true that a layer of reactionary elements contributed to Trump's support, these factors alone do not account for the scale of his success and the fact that he increased his share of the vote in almost every demographic group, notably even amongst black and Latino working-class communities. In fact, in several states where Trump performed strongly or improved his vote share, voters simultaneously endorsed progressive ballot initiatives, such as measures to protect abortion rights or increase the minimum wage.
13. The key factor behind Trump's victory lies in his ability to tap into, articulate, and mobilise a widespread and deeply rooted anti-estab-



lishment sentiment that permeates American society.

14. A striking example of this phenomenon can be seen in the public response to the assassination of the United Healthcare CEO by Luigi Mangione. While the act itself was shocking, the public reaction – marked by sympathy for the assailant rather than the victim – was even more revealing. Mangione has come to be seen by many as a kind of folk hero. Notably, this response was not confined to the political left but was also shared by a section of conservatives and Republican voters, including Trump supporters.
15. This situation presents a paradox. Trump, despite being a billionaire and surrounding himself with other billionaires, has successfully positioned himself as the voice of anti-establishment anger. This contradiction highlights the incoherent and distorted nature of the current political mood. Nevertheless, it does reflect a genuine and widespread disaffection with mainstream institutions: with big business, with political elites, and with the state apparatus as a whole.
16. The root cause of this anti-establishment anger can be found in the crisis of capitalism. It has reached massive proportions since the crisis of 2008, from which the system has not yet fully recovered. Support for bourgeois democracy in the advanced capitalist countries was built for decades on the idea that capitalism was able to satisfy some of the basic needs of the working class (healthcare, education, pensions...) and the expectation that each generation's living standards would improve, however slightly, in comparison with those of the previous generation.
17. That is no longer the case. In the United States, in 1970, more than 90 percent of 30-year-olds earned higher incomes than their parents had at the same age. However, by 2010, this percentage had decreased to 50 percent. By 2017, only 37 percent of Americans anticipated that their children would achieve better living standards than they themselves had.
18. According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, since the early 1980s, the real wages of working-class Americans have either remained the same or decreased, particularly as jobs were outsourced to other countries. Similarly, the Economic Policy Institute reports that wages for lower- and middle-income households have seen little to no growth since the late 1970s, while the cost of living has continued to rise.
19. At the same time there is an obscene polarisation of wealth. On the one hand, a small handful of billionaires are increasing their assets. On the other hand, a growing number of working people find it more difficult to make ends meet. They are faced with austerity cuts, the purchasing



power of wages being eaten up by inflation, increased energy bills, a housing crisis, etc.

20. The media, the politicians, the established political parties, parliaments, the judiciary, all are quite rightly seen as representing the interests of a small privileged elite, making decisions to defend their own narrow, selfish interests rather than serving the needs of the many.
 21. The crisis of 2008 was followed by brutal austerity cuts in all countries. All the conquests of the past came under attack. The masses saw attacks on their living standards whilst the banks were bailed out. That gave rise to enormous anger, mass protest movements and, above all, to an unprecedented crisis of legitimacy of all bourgeois institutions.
 22. In the first instance, that mood, exemplified in the mass anti-austerity movements around 2011, found an expression on the left. There was a rise of left-wing, anti-establishment figures and parties across Europe and the United States: Podemos, Syriza, Jeremy Corbyn, Bernie Sanders, among others. Yet each of these movements ultimately betrayed the expectations which had been created. The limits of the reformist politics of their leaders were exposed.
 23. It was the abject failure of these left figures that paved the way for the rise of reactionary demagogues like Trump.
 24. The same processes are at play in most advanced capitalist countries: the crisis of capitalism, attacks on the working class, bankruptcy of the left, and the rise of right-wing demagogues riding the wave of an anti-establishment mood.
- 25. DANGER OF FASCISM OR BONAPARTISM?**
26. Even before Trump was elected, there was a noisy campaign in the bourgeois media and the Left to denounce him as a fascist.
 27. Marxism is a science. Like all sciences, it possesses a scientific terminology. Words such as 'fascism' have, for us, precise meanings. They are not mere terms of abuse, or labels that can be conveniently stuck onto any individual who does not meet with our approval.
 28. Let us begin with a precise definition of fascism. In the Marxist sense, fascism is a counter-revolutionary movement – a mass movement composed principally of the lumpen proletariat and the enraged petty bourgeoisie. It is used as a battering ram to crush and atomise the working class and establish a totalitarian state in which the bourgeoisie hands state power over to a fascist bureaucracy.
 29. The chief characteristic of the fascist state is extreme centralisation and absolute state power, in which the banks and big monopolies are protected, but subjected to strong central



control by a large and powerful fascist bureaucracy. In *What is National Socialism?*, Trotsky explains:

30. “German fascism, like Italian fascism, raised itself to power on the backs of the petty bourgeoisie, which it turned into a battering ram against the organizations of the working class and the institutions of democracy. But fascism in power is least of all the rule of the petty bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it is the most ruthless dictatorship of monopoly capital.”
31. Such, in general terms, are the main features of fascism. How does this compare with the ideology and content of the Trump phenomenon? We have already had the experience of one Trump government, which – according to the dire warnings of the Democrats and the entire liberal establishment – would proceed to abolish democracy. It did no such thing.
32. No major steps were taken to limit the right to strike and demonstrate, still less to abolish free trade unions. Elections were held as usual, and finally, although amidst a general uproar, Trump was succeeded by Joe Biden in an election. Say what you like about the first Trump government, but it bore no relation whatsoever to any kind of fascism.
33. Furthermore, the class balance of forces has changed significantly since the 1930s. In the advanced capitalist countries the peasantry, which represented a large section of the population, has been reduced to very small numbers, and professions which were previously considered ‘middle class’ (civil servants, doctors, teachers) have become proletarianised, with these sectors joining unions and going on strike. The social weight of the working class was enormously strengthened by the development of the productive forces during the enormous economic upswing that followed the end of the Second World War.
34. The ideology of Trumpism – insofar as it exists – is very far from fascism. Far from desiring a strong state, Donald Trump’s ideal is that of free market capitalism, in which the state plays little or no role at all (with the exception of protectionist tariffs).
35. Others have raised the idea that Trump represents a Bonapartist regime. The idea here, again, is to portray Trump as a dictator set on a path to crush the working class. But this form of labelling does not explain anything. In reality, far from attempting to crush the working class, Trump is appealing to it demagogically and trying to appease it. Of course, being a bourgeois politician he represents interests that are fundamentally opposed to those of the workers. But that does not make him a dictator.
36. It is possible to point to this or that element in the present situation that can be said to be an element of Bonapartism. That may be so. But similar comments could be made of



almost any recent bourgeois democratic regime.

37. Merely to contain certain elements of a phenomenon does not yet signify the actual emergence of that phenomenon as such. One could, of course, say there are elements of Bonapartism present in Trumpism. But that is not at all the same as saying a Bonapartist regime actually exists in the United States.
38. The problem is that 'Bonapartism' is a very elastic term. It covers a wide gamut of things, starting with the classical concept of Bonapartism, which is basically rule by the sword. It is not useful to analyse the present Trump government in Washington in this fashion, which, despite its many peculiarities, still remains a bourgeois democracy. Our task is not to assign labels to things, but to follow the process as it unfolds and understand its essential aspects.

39. TECTONIC SHIFTS IN WORLD RELATIONS

40. Trump's foreign policy represents a major turn in world relations and the end of the liberal world order which had existed for 80 years after the Second World War. It is a recognition of the relative decline of US imperialism and of the existence of rival imperialist powers, Russia and particularly China, its main imperialist rival in the world arena.
41. At the end of the Second World War, the US emerged enormously strengthened. With Europe and Japan ruined by the war, America accounted for 50 percent of world GDP and for 60 percent of world manufacturing output. Its only serious rival on the world arena was the Soviet Union, which had emerged strengthened from the war, having defeated Nazi Germany and advanced across the continent.
42. The Chinese revolution further strengthened the Stalinist bloc. The US worked to rebuild Western Europe and Japan in an effort to contain the 'advance of Communism'. The Soviet bureaucracy was not interested in world revolution and was quite prepared to reach a modus vivendi with Washington, expressed in the policy of 'peaceful coexistence'.
43. Thus followed a period of relative equilibrium between the US and the USSR, two nuclear powers, which was known as the Cold War. On the basis of American domination, a series of formally multilateral institutions were created to manage world relations (the United Nations) and the world economy (the IMF and the World Bank set up at the Bretton Woods Conference). That equilibrium was reinforced by the post-war economic upswing, a period of extraordinary development of the productive forces and of the world market.



44. This period lasted until the collapse of Stalinism in 1989-1991 and the restoration of capitalism in Russia and China. That produced another major turn in the world situation. The United States had become the dominant imperialist power, not challenged by anyone.
45. The 1991 imperialist war against Iraq was carried out under the auspices of the UN with Russia voting in favour and China merely abstaining. There seemed to be no opposition to the domination of US imperialism. From an economic point of view, Washington pushed globalisation and 'neoliberalism': that is the further integration of the world market, under the domination of US imperialism, and the rolling back of the state.
46. That period of unfettered domination of US imperialism has been slowly eroded over the last 35 years, to the point where a completely new situation has now emerged.
47. Driven by its supreme arrogance, the US launched the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. But here, history began to go into reverse. The Americans were bogged down in these unwinnable wars for 15 years, at a great cost to themselves in terms of expenditure and loss of personnel. In August 2021, they were forced into a humiliating retreat from Afghanistan.
48. These experiences left the US public with no appetite for foreign military adventures and the American ruling

class very wary of committing ground troops abroad. Along with the rise of new regional and world powers, the relative balance of forces globally was shifting. US imperialism learnt nothing from these experiences. It refused to admit the new balance of forces and tried instead to maintain its domination and thus became embroiled in a whole series of conflicts that it could not win.

49. A MULTIPOLAR WORLD?

50. The world situation is dominated by enormous instability in world relations. This is the result of the struggle for world hegemony between the US, the world's most powerful imperialist power, which is in relative decline, and China, a younger, more dynamic rising imperialist power. We are witnessing a tremendous shift, comparable in scale to the movement of the tectonic plates on the Earth's crust. Such movements are accompanied by explosions of all sorts. The war in Ukraine – where a humiliating defeat for US-NATO is being prepared – and the conflict in the Middle East, are expressions of this fact.
51. Trump's approach to world relations represent an attempt to recognise that the US cannot be the world's only policeman. In his view, and that of his close collaborators, the attempt of the US to maintain hegemony and total domination is extremely costly, impractical and damaging to its core national security interests.



52. That does not mean that the US ceases to be an imperialist power or that Trump's policies are in the interests of the oppressed peoples of the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Trump's foreign policy represents a sharp delimitation of what are and what are not US core national security interests, starting in North America.
53. When Trump says America needs to have control over the Panama Canal and Greenland, he is expressing the needs of US imperialism. The Panama Canal is a crucial trading route, linking the Pacific with the Gulf of Mexico and carrying 40 percent of the US' container traffic.
54. As for Greenland, it has always had an important geostrategic location, which is why the US has a military presence on the island. Global warming has led to increased shipping traffic between the Pacific and the Atlantic across the Arctic. Less polar ice means easier access to sea beds, where there are huge reserves of rare earth minerals. The island itself also has important deposits of critical minerals (rare earths, uranium) as well as gas and oil, which are now becoming more accessible, also as a result of global warming. Here the US is in competition with China and Russia for the control of these trading routes and resources.
55. Trump's foreign policy is based on the recognition of the limitations of US power. The consequence of that is an attempt to disentangle America from a series of costly conflicts (Ukraine, Middle East) through deals, in order to rebuild its power and to concentrate on its main rival on the world arena, China.
56. In the whole period since the end of the Second World War, or perhaps even before that, US imperialism maintained the pretence of acting on behalf of human rights, spreading democracy and the 'rules-based order', defending 'the sacred principle of the inviolability of national borders', and so on.
57. They were acting through 'multilateral' international institutions, which were apparently neutral, in which all countries had a say: the United Nations, the WTO, the IMF, and so on. In reality, this was just a fig leaf. It was always a farce. Either the interests of US imperialism were expressed through these institutions, or they would ignore them completely. The difference now is that Trump does not care at all for any of these pretences. He seems determined to tear up the whole rulebook and express things more openly, as they really are.
58. Some have argued that faced with unbridled US power, the idea of a multipolar world was something progressive, that would allow oppressed countries a greater degree of sovereignty, an ideal that we should fight for. Now we can see a glimpse of



what a 'multipolar' world might look like: imperialist powers carving out the world into spheres of influence, bullying countries into submitting to one or another.

59. THE RELATIVE DECLINE OF US IMPERIALISM

60. We must emphasise that when we speak of the decline of US imperialism, we refer to a relative decline. That is, a decline in comparison with its previous position relative to other competing powers. The United States remains, on all measures, the most powerful and reactionary force in the world.
61. In 1985, the US represented 36 percent of the world's GDP. It is now down to 26 percent (2024). In the same period, China has grown from 2.5 percent of the world's GDP to 18.5 percent. Japan, which reached a peak of 18 percent in 1995, has now collapsed to just 5.2 percent.
62. The US still dominates the world economy through its control of financial markets. A massive 58 percent of the world's currency reserves are held in US dollars (while only 2 percent are held in Chinese renminbi), although the figure is down from 73 percent in 2001. The dollar also represents 58 percent of the world's exports invoicing. In terms of net outflow of Foreign Direct Investment (a proxy for export of capital), the US is top of the world with US\$454 trillion, while China (in-

cluding Hong Kong) comes second at US\$287 trillion.

63. It is a country's economic clout which gives it international power, but this needs to be backed by military might. The US' military spending represents 40 percent of the world's total, with China coming second at 12 percent and Russia third with 4.5 percent. The US spends more than the following 10 countries in the ranking combined.
64. Nevertheless, the USA can no longer claim to be the undisputed master of the world. The colossal economic power of China and its consequent advances in military strength, together with the military superiority which Russia has demonstrated on the battlefields of Ukraine, present it with a formidable challenge. Thus, on all sides, the limitations of America's global power are being cruelly exposed.
65. This relative decline finds its expression economically with the partial flight of capital away from the dollar, US treasuries, and American stocks. With the US monopolies facing greater competition from international rivals, particularly from China, American stocks are no longer considered the surefire bet that they previously were by investors. Similarly, as the US federal debt mountain grows, and the American government resorts to greater deficit financing, US treasuries (government debt bonds) are no



longer considered the financial safe haven they once were. This has led to a weakening of the dollar – in spite of US tariffs – and its dominance in the arena of global finance.

66. This represents a ‘market correction’, bringing the price of America’s currency, assets, and bonds closer in line with US capitalism’s real diminished economic position. Nevertheless, as with US military power and America’s former role as the world’s policeman, there is no viable alternative to the dollar when it comes to world trade and finance. Hence the growing alarm amongst bourgeois strategists about the chaotic impact on the global financial system and world economy if confidence in the dollar were to collapse.
67. This is another way in which the relative decline of US capitalism and the emerging ‘multipolarity’ will contribute towards greater uncertainty and instability on a world scale. One by one, all the pillars of the postwar order are being eroded and undermined, with explosive consequences – economically, militarily, and politically.

68. RUSSIA’S MILITARY CLOUT

69. While Russia is not an economic colossus comparable with China, it has established a solid economic and technological base. This has enabled it to successfully withstand the unprecedented economic aggression the West has inflicted on it under

the banner of ‘sanctions’. Moreover, it has done this while carrying on a war that has defeated all the weapons systems hurled against it by western imperialism. It has built a powerful army that is a match for the combined forces of the European states; it has built a formidable defence industry that is outproducing both the United States and Europe in tanks, artillery, ammunition, missiles and drones; and it possesses the world’s largest nuclear arsenal, which it inherited from the USSR.

70. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the wholesale looting of the planned economy, the Russian ruling class toyed with the idea of being accepted at the world table on equal terms. They even floated the idea of joining NATO. This was rejected. The US wanted to exercise complete and unfettered domination over the world and they saw no need to share power with a weak and crisis-ridden Russia.
71. The humiliation of Russia was starkly revealed, first when Germany and the US engineered the reactionary breakup of Yugoslavia in Russia’s traditional sphere of influence, and then with the bombing of Serbia in 1999. Yeltsin, a buffoonish drunk and a puppet of US imperialism, was a representative of that subordinate relationship.
72. However, as Russia gradually recovered from the economic crisis, the ruling circles were no longer pre-



pared to accept their humiliation in the international arena. This is what was behind the rise of Putin, the cunning Bonapartist, who manipulated his way to power by all kinds of manoeuvres.

73. They started to push back against the eastward advance of NATO, a move which broke all the promises made to the Russians in 1990 when they were promised there would be no eastward expansion of NATO, in exchange for accepting a unified Germany within the alliance.
74. In 2008, Russia waged a short and effective war in Georgia, destroying the country's army, which had been trained and equipped by NATO. That was the first warning shot by Russia, signalling it would no longer accept the encroachments of the West. Syria and Ukraine were the next. In each of these countries, the strength of Russia in relation to US imperialism was put to the test. The relative decline of US imperialism, meanwhile, was further revealed in their humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.
75. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was the logical conclusion of the West's refusal to accept Russia's national security concerns, expressed in the demand of neutrality for Ukraine and a halt to the eastward expansion of NATO. When Donald Trump asserts that this war was unnecessary, and that if he had been president it would have never taken place, this is probably true. US imperialism and its European allies were well aware that NATO membership of Ukraine was a red line from the point of view of the national security interests of Russia. Despite this, they decided to invite the Ukrainians to apply for NATO membership in 2008. This was a blatant provocation, which logically would lead to the most serious consequences. It was this fatal step that eventually led to war.
76. The West insisted on Ukraine's 'right to join NATO' – when its neutral status, the ban on foreign military bases and non-participation in military blocs was something that had been agreed, and even written into the Ukrainian declaration of independence. The head of the CIA, William J. Burns, had repeatedly warned against it. But the clique of warmongers who ran the foreign policy of the Biden administration – and Joe Biden himself – had other ideas.
77. Biden thought he could use Ukraine as cannon fodder in a campaign to weaken Russia and cripple its role in the world. A country like Russia, a rival to US imperialism, could not be allowed to threaten US global hegemony. In March 2022, Biden, puffed up by his own arrogance, even raised the idea of regime change in Moscow! Together with the Europeans, he was convinced that economic sanctions and military exhaustion would bring Russia to the point of collapse. They



seriously underestimated the extent of Russia's economic and military power. As a result, US imperialism has found itself embroiled in an unwinnable war, which has represented a colossal drain on its financial and military resources.

78. Trump now insists that this disaster was not his doing. He says: "This is not my war. It is Joe Biden's war." And that is correct. The strategists of capital are quite capable of making mistakes based on miscalculations. And this is a case in point. When Trump says that the war in Ukraine does not represent America's "core interests," he is absolutely correct. America faces a far greater threat in Asia and the Pacific in the rising power of China, in addition to other problems in the Middle East and a growing economic crisis. That explains his haste in trying to extricate US imperialism from the treacherous swamp of Ukraine. But the problems created by Biden and his European stooges are proving difficult to resolve.
79. The men and women who run the show in Washington, London, Paris and Berlin systematically sabotaged every attempt to bring about a peaceful solution. In April 2022, negotiations in Turkey between Ukraine and Russia were quite advanced and could have led to an end of the war, on the basis of accepting a number of Russian demands. Western imperialism, in the person of Boris Johnson, scuppered the talks, pressuring Zelensky not to sign on the promise of unlimited support which would lead to Ukraine's full victory.
80. Today, the US faces a humiliating defeat in Ukraine. Sanctions have not had the desired effect. Rather than suffering economic collapse, Russia has enjoyed steady economic growth rates far exceeding those of the West. Far from becoming isolated, it has now established closer economic ties with China and a number of key countries which are meant to be in the US sphere of influence. Countries like India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and others, have helped it to circumvent sanctions.
81. China and Russia have now become much closer allies united by their opposition to US domination of the world, and have gathered around them a whole series of other countries. When the US defeat in Ukraine is finally realised it will have enormous and lasting consequences for world relations, further weakening the power of US imperialism across the world.
82. The US-NATO defeat in Ukraine will send a powerful message. The world's mightiest imperialist power cannot always impose its will. Furthermore, Russia has emerged from it with a large army, tested in the latest methods and techniques of modern warfare, and with a powerful military-industrial complex.



83. Trump's policy here represents a sharp turn from the previous policy of US imperialism. He has recognised that this war against Russia cannot be won and therefore is attempting to pull the US out of it. There is also a calculation that reaching a deal with Russia which recognises her national security interests (i.e. those of Russian imperialism) might pull her back from her close alliance with China, US imperialism's main rival on the world scene. However, it is unlikely that these calculations will work, since during the three years of the war, the West has pushed Russia too close to China for them to easily unwind this process. Recent statements and actions by both the Russian and Chinese governments indicate that both sides view their rapprochement as strategic.
- 84. THE RISE OF CHINA AS AN IMPERIALIST POWER**
85. China's rapid transformation from extreme economic backwardness to a powerful capitalist country has few parallels in modern history. In an amazingly short space of time, it has risen to a position where it is able to challenge the power of mighty US imperialism.
86. China today has absolutely nothing in common with the weak, semi-feudal and semi-colonial, dominated nation that it was in 1938. In fact, at the present time, China is not only a capitalist country, but one which now has all the features of an imperialist power in its own right.
87. It is impossible to explain this transformation without understanding the crucial role played by the Chinese Revolution of 1949, which abolished landlordism and capitalism and created the basis for a nationalised planned economy, which was the prior condition for transforming China from a backward, semi-colonial nation into its present position as an economic giant.
88. As a latecomer to the international arena, it has had to fight to control sources of raw materials and energy for its industry, fields of investment for its capital, trading routes for its imports and exports, and markets for its products. In all these fields, it has scored notable successes.
89. The 30-year rise of China has been the result of massive investment in the means of production and reliance on the world markets. Initially, it took advantage of its large reserves of cheap labour to export goods like textiles and toys to the world market.
90. Now, it is a technologically advanced capitalist economy, which has a world-dominating position in a series of high-tech markets (electric vehicles and EV batteries, photovoltaic cells, antibiotic ingredients, commercial drones, 5G cellular communications infrastructure, nuclear power plants, etc.), not only in terms of volume of sales, but also in terms of innovation.



91. China is also a world leader in the field of robotics. It ranks number three in the world in industrial robot density, with 470 per 10,000 manufacturing workers, even though its manufacturing workforce is over 37 million. This puts it behind only South Korea (1012) and Singapore (770), and ahead of Germany (429) and Japan (419), whilst being well above the level of the US (295). These are figures for 2023, and China's ranking has probably improved since then, as in 2023 it represented 51 percent of all new industrial robot installations in the world.
92. In terms of the export of capital, China is second only to the US. In 2023, the US accounted for 32.8 percent of global Foreign Direct Investment outflows, with China and Hong Kong representing a combined 20.1 percent. In terms of accumulated FDI stock, the US had 15.1 percent of the global total, while China and Hong Kong accounted for 11.3 percent.
93. As a result of the way capitalism was restored in China, the state plays an important role in the economy. It has had a conscious policy of fostering and funding the development of technology. 'Made in China 2025' had the aim of achieving a great leap forward in key industries, and in making the country self-sufficient and not dependent on the West. China's research and development expenditure has significantly increased and is almost on a par with that of the US.
94. This success was not gained without creating growing contradictions and conflicts with other capitalist nations, leading eventually to the present trade war with the United States.
95. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening up of new markets under the policy of globalisation, the growth of the capitalist economy in China was initially seen by western economists and investors as a golden opportunity.
96. Western investors fell over themselves in their haste to set up factories in China, where they could exploit an apparently endless supply of cheap labour. Between 1997 and 2019, 36 percent of global capital stock growth occurred in China. So great was the penetration of China by US capital, that the two economies appeared to be indissolubly joined at the hip.
97. Growth in China actually played a crucial role in the development of the world economy for a number of decades. In 2008, the western bourgeois even hoped that China would help pull the world economy out of recession. However, as we pointed out at the time, it had a very serious and threatening downside for them.
98. These factories, utilising modern technology, would inevitably produce vast quantities of cheap commodities which had to be exported, since the demand for them in China itself remained limited. Ultimately, this has caused serious problems



- for the United States and other western economies.
99. Everything changed into its opposite. The question was increasingly posed: who is helping whom? It is true that big profits were being made by western investors, but China was establishing advanced manufacturing capabilities, technological expertise, infrastructure, and a skilled workforce. This increasingly came to be seen as a threat, particularly in America.
 100. China has now become an irreplaceable supplier for global manufacturers, whether producing finished consumer products like iPhones or essential capital goods and components. China is the primary supplier for 36 percent of US imports, fulfilling over 70 percent of the US demand for those products.
 101. China has become a systemic rival of the US on the world scene. This is the real meaning of Trump's trade war on the country. This is a struggle between two imperialist powers to assert their relative strength on the world market.
 102. Washington has used the most extreme measures to do so, banning the sale of the most advanced microchips to China, barring the sale of the most advanced lithography machines, and preventing companies like Huawei from bidding for 5G infrastructure contracts in several countries, etc.
 103. But the attempts by the US to block China's development in cutting edge technology have had the opposite effect. In response, China has accelerated the drive towards achieving self-reliance. While it still faces bottle-necks, for instance, as a result of not having access to the most advanced EUV lithography machines which are used to manufacture the most advanced microprocessors, China has used ingenuity to find partial work-arounds.
 104. It is true that, despite its progress, many contradictions exist in the Chinese economy. Productivity of labour in China has been growing through the development of science, industry and technology, while in Europe it has been stagnant for a long period of time and in the US has only experienced some modest growth in recent years. Yet Chinese productivity of labour overall still lags behind that of the United States by a sizeable margin. It will take time for the gap to be closed.
 105. It is also fair to assume that the unprecedented rates of growth that China attained over the last few decades will not be maintained. Indeed, the slowdown has already begun. In the 1990s, China grew at a breathtaking pace of 9 percent a year, with peaks of 14 percent. Between 2012 and 2019 it grew between 6 and 7 percent. It is now around 5 percent. Yet it is also the case that the Chinese economy as a whole is still growing faster



than the advanced capitalist countries in the West.

106. Of course, by the very fact of having become a capitalist economy and one heavily integrated into the world market, China must eventually face all the problems that this entails. Already, there are regional disparities in economic development as well as massive income inequality. Unemployment has risen among migrant workers and youth.
107. Huge economic stimulus packages, Keynesian measures, have led to an increase in debt. Government debt to GDP, which was only 23 percent in 2000 has now increased to 60.5 percent in 2024. This is a significant increase, but it is still lower than most advanced capitalist economies. Total debt (state, corporate and household) however, has reached 300 percent of GDP.
108. The rise of protectionism and the slowdown of world trade will undoubtedly affect China. The only manner in which it can overcome this crisis will be to push harder to unload its overproduction onto the world market, which in turn will add to the tensions on a world scale and at the same time deepen the crisis of the system as a whole.
109. In this titanic struggle between two economic giants, the question is posed point blank: who will prevail? The columns of the western press are full of negative appraisals and dire warnings for the future of the Chinese economy.
110. The western press consistently seeks to present a very black picture of the Chinese economy – as they invariably do in relation to the Russian economy, which, however, is still maintaining a healthy growth rate of around 4 to 5 percent a year. This hardly suggests an economy that is on the verge of collapse.
111. China is certainly not immune from crisis, but it also has considerable reserves to meet this challenge and emerge from it with far less damage than is often touted in the western press. Above all, one must bear in mind that China, although it is a capitalist country, still has many peculiarities.
112. It is, in fact, an economy that still maintains very considerable elements of state control, intervention and planning. This works very much in its favour, when compared to countries like the United States.
113. There are also important political, cultural and psychological factors that can play a decisive role in any conflict with foreign imperialist powers. The Chinese people have long and bitter memories of their past subjugation, exploitation and humiliation at the hands of imperialism.
114. However much they may dislike their own ruling class, the hatred of foreign imperialists runs far deeper and can



provide a powerful support to the regime in its struggle with the USA.

115. The ruling circles of the USA have watched the rise of China with increasing panic. They have adopted a belligerent attitude, expressed, on the one hand, by Trump's outrageous tariff increases, on the other hand by constant provocations over Taiwan.
116. The warmongers in Washington are constantly accusing China of planning to invade what the Chinese regard as a rebellious island which is rightfully theirs.
117. But China's ruling circles are run by men who have long learned the art of patience in diplomacy. They have no need to invade Taiwan. They know that, sooner or later, it will be reunited with the mainland. They waited decades to regain control of Hong Kong from the British. And they see no reason to seek a hasty military solution to the problem.
118. Only a serious miscalculation on the part of the warmongers in Washington, or a rash decision by Taiwanese nationalists to proclaim independence, would provoke them into taking military action. Under such circumstances, the men in Beijing would hold all the cards.
119. There is no way that Taiwan could hold out for long against the might of the Chinese army and navy, which is stationed only a few miles away, whereas the Americans would have to move a large force to meet difficult and dangerous conditions across an entire ocean.
120. In any case, there is nothing to indicate that Donald Trump himself is looking for military conflict with China. He prefers other methods – the imposition of crippling sanctions and high tariffs, to force China to submit. But China has no intention of submitting, either in an economic war or in actual military conflict.
121. Until recently, China has projected its power mainly through economic means, but it is also building its military power. China has recently announced a 7.2 percent increase in defence spending. It already possesses a huge and powerful land army and is now in the process of developing an equally powerful and modern navy to defend its interests in the high seas.
122. A recent BBC article states that it now possesses the largest navy in the world, surpassing that of the United States. Nor is it correct to say that its Armed Forces are based on antiquated technology and equipment. The same article states that:
123. "China is now fully committed to developing 'intelligentised' warfare, or future military methods based on disruptive technologies – especially artificial intelligence, according to the US Department of Defense."
124. It adds that:



125. “China’s Academy of Military Science has been given a mandate to make sure that this happens, through “civil-military fusion”, in other words joining up Chinese private sector technology companies with the country’s defence industries. Reports suggest that China may already be using artificial intelligence in military robotics and missile guidance systems, as well as unmanned aerial vehicles and unmanned naval vessels.”
126. Moreover, China has one of the most active space programmes in the world. Among other missions, it has ambitious plans to build a space station on the moon and visit Mars. Apart from their intrinsic scientific interest, these plans are clearly related to a highly ambitious programme of rearmament.
127. The development of the productive forces in China is now an established fact. It is pointless to deny this. Nor, objectively speaking, is it a negative development from the standpoint of the world revolution, for it has created a massive working class, one which has become used to a steady increase in its living standards over a protracted period. This is a young, fresh working class, unsaddled by defeats, not bound by reformist organisations.
128. “China is a sleeping dragon. Let China sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world” is a statement frequently attributed to Napoleon. Whether he said it or not, it certain-

ly applies to the powerful Chinese proletariat at the present time. The moment of truth may be delayed for some time. But when that mighty force starts to move it will provoke an explosion of seismic proportions.

129. BALANCING BETWEEN THE POWERS

130. The relative decline of US imperialism and the rise of China have created a situation in which some countries can balance one against the other and gain a small degree of autonomy to pursue their own interests, at the very least at a regional level. This includes countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India and others to different degrees.
131. The rise of the BRICS, which were formally launched in 2009, represent an attempt by China and Russia to strengthen their position on the world arena, to protect their economic interests and to bind a whole series of countries into their sphere of influence.
132. The implementation of wide-ranging economic sanctions by US imperialism against Russia accelerated this process. In working out mechanisms to avoid and overcome sanctions, Russia has made a series of alliances with other countries, including Saudi Arabia, India, China and many others.
133. Rather than demonstrating US power, the failure of sanctions revealed the limits of US imperialism’s ability to



impose its will and pushed a number of countries to consider alternatives to US domination of financial transactions. Membership of the BRICS has expanded with new countries being invited or applying to join.

134. When dealing with this question it is important to have a sense of proportion. As important as these changes are, the BRICS are riddled with all sorts of contradictions. Brazil, while being part of the BRICS, is at the same time part of Mercosur, the South American free trade bloc, which is negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU.
135. India is a part of it, but is reluctant to allow new members to join as that would diminish its weight in the bloc. It also has a 'strategic partnership' with the US; it is part of the Quad security and military alliance with the US, Japan and Australia; and its Navy conducts regular military exercises with the US.
136. What is significant here is that a country like India, a US ally and a rival of China, has played an important role in helping Russia bypass US sanctions. India buys Russian oil at a discount price and then resells it on to Europe in the form of refined products at a higher price. For now, the US has decided not to take measures against India.
137. So far, the BRICS are no more than a loose alliance of countries. The United States' imperialist bullying

of its rivals is what is pushing them closer together and encouraging others to join.

138. CRISIS IN EUROPE

139. While the US has suffered a relative decline in its strength and influence globally, the old European imperialist powers – Britain, France, Germany and the others – have declined much further since their former days of glory, to second-rate world powers. It is worth noting that Europe, as an imperialist bloc, has been particularly weakened in the last decade. A series of military coups, for instance, have displaced France from Central Africa and the Sahel, largely to the benefit of Russia.
140. The European powers followed US imperialism in its Ukraine proxy war against Russia, something that has had a devastating impact on their economy. Since the collapse of Stalinism in 1989-1991, Germany had pursued a policy of expanding its influence to the East and had established close economic links with Russia. German industry had benefited from cheap Russian energy. Before the Ukraine war, more than half of Germany's natural gas, a third of all the oil, and half of its coal imports were coming from Russia.
141. This was one of the reasons for the success of German industry in the world, the other two being the deregulation of the labour market (carried out under social democratic govern-



ments) and the investment ploughed into industry in the second half of the last century. The domination of the European Union by the German ruling class and free trade with China and the US completed a virtuous cycle that allowed Germany to come out apparently unscathed from the 2008 crisis.

142. The situation was similar for the EU as a whole, where Russia was the largest supplier of petroleum (24.8 percent), pipeline gas (48 percent) and coal (47.9 percent). European sanctions imposed on Russia after the Ukraine war started led to much higher energy prices, with a knock on effect on inflation and the loss of competitiveness of European exports. In the end, Europe has had to import much more expensive liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the US and much more expensive Russian oil products via India.
143. In fact, a large part of Germany's gas still comes from Russia, only now it does so in the form of LNG, at a much higher price. The German, French and Italian ruling classes have shot themselves in the foot and now they are paying a heavy price. Already under the Biden presidency, the United States has repaid its European allies by waging a trade war against them through a battery of protectionist measures and industrial subsidies.
144. The European Economic Community, and later the European Union, represented an attempt on the part of the weakened imperialist powers of the continent to huddle together after the Second World War in the hope of having a bigger say in world politics and the economy. In practice, German capital dominated the other weaker economies. While there was economic growth, a certain degree of economic integration was achieved and even a single currency.
145. However, the different national ruling classes composing it remained in existence, each one with their own particular interests. Despite all the talk, there is no common economic policy, no united foreign policy and no single army to implement it. While German capital was based on competitive industrial exports and its interests lay in the East, France draws large sums in agricultural subsidies from the EU, and its imperialist interests are to be found in the former French colonies, mainly in Africa.
146. The sovereign debt crisis which followed the 2008 recession stretched the EU to its limits. The situation has now worsened even further. The recent report by former European Central Bank president, Mario Draghi, paints the crisis of European capitalism in alarming terms, but he is not wrong. At bottom, the reason the EU is not able to compete with its imperialist rivals in the world is the fact that it is not a single economic-political entity, but rather a collection of several small and medium-sized



economies, each one with their own ruling class, their own national industries, their own sets of regulations, etc. Europe's economy is sclerotic and has been overtaken by its rivals in terms of productivity growth.

147. The productive forces have outgrown the nation state, and this problem is particularly acute in the small but highly developed economies of Europe.
148. The protracted decline of European imperialist powers was masked by the fact that the US was underwriting its defence, and supporting the EU politically. For the best part of 80 years, US imperialism propped up Europe, under its domination, as a bulwark against the Soviet Union. This was a very useful arrangement for European capitalism as it was able to outsource a sizeable portion of its military defence costs to its powerful cousin on the other side of the Atlantic.
149. That is now over. US imperialism under Trump has decided to manage its relative decline by trying to reach an agreement with Russia so as to better concentrate on its main rival in the world arena: China. The centre of world politics and the economy is no longer the Atlantic but the Pacific. That shift has been in the making since the end of the Second World War, but has now come to the fore in an explosive manner.
150. This is a major shock to world relations which no one can ignore. If the US wants to reach an understanding with Russia, that leaves European imperialism in a very weak position. The US is no longer its friend and ally. Some have even gone as far as to say that Washington now regards Europe as a rival or an enemy.
151. At the very least, Trump has made it clear that the US is no longer prepared to subsidise Europe's defence. The withdrawal of the US' protective umbrella, as some have described it, has revealed starkly all the accumulated weaknesses of European imperialism, which have built up over decades of decline.
152. The crisis of European capitalism has important political and social implications. The rise of right-wing populist, euro-sceptic and anti-establishment forces across the continent is a direct result of it. The European working class, with its forces largely intact and undefeated, will not accept a new round of austerity cuts and mass layoffs without a fight. The stage is set for an explosion of the class struggle.

153. WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

154. The current conflict in the Middle East can only be understood against the background of the world situation. US imperialism had been weakened in the Middle East, while Russia, China and also Iran had become strengthened. Israel felt threatened. The 7 October attack was a serious blow to the Israeli ruling class. It de-



stroyed the myth of invincibility and questioned the ability of the Zionist state to protect its Jewish citizens, the key question which the Israeli ruling class had used to gather the population behind it.

155. It also clearly exposed the collapse of the Oslo Accords, signed in the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism. The whole thing was a cynical fraud from start to finish. The Zionist ruling class never really entertained any idea of conceding the Palestinians a viable homeland. They regarded the Palestinian National Authority (PA) as simply a way of outsourcing the policing of the Palestinians. This discredited Fatah and the PA – seen quite correctly as mere puppets of Israel – has led, with the acquiescence of Israel, to the rise of Hamas, which was seen by many as the only force pursuing the struggle for Palestinian national rights.
156. In reality, however, the reactionary methods of Hamas have led the Palestinians into a blind alley from which it is hard to see any way out.
157. The Abraham Accords, signed in 2020 under the pressure of the first Trump administration, were meant to establish the position of Israel in the region as a legitimate actor and to normalise trade relations between it and the Arab countries. This would have meant the burying of Palestinian national aspirations, something the reactionary Arab regimes were quite happy to do. The 7 October attack was a desperate response to that.
158. The attack was initially met with jubilation by the Palestinians, but it had the most terrible consequences. It handed Netanyahu, who immediately prior had faced a long wave of mass protests, a perfect excuse to launch a genocidal campaign against Gaza. One year later, the Israelis had reduced Gaza to a pile of smoking rubble, but they had not achieved their stated aims: the release of the hostages and the destruction of Hamas. This led to mass demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of Israelis and even a brief general strike in September 2024.
159. The character of these demonstrations was not one of support for the Palestinian cause, nor of opposition to the war per se. Nevertheless, the fact that there was such a degree of mass opposition to the prime minister in the middle of the war is an indication of the depth of the divisions within Israeli society.
160. The collapse of his support pushed Netanyahu to escalate the situation with the invasion of Lebanon and an attack on Hezbollah, which was accompanied by constant provocations against Iran. In order to save himself politically, he has repeatedly shown that he would be prepared to unleash a regional war, which would force the US to intervene directly on his side.



161. Despite the danger that the massacre in Gaza could lead to the revolutionary destabilisation of the reactionary Arab regimes (in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and above all in Jordan), Biden made it clear that his support for Israel was “iron-clad”, and Netanyahu cashed this blank cheque repeatedly, pursuing a path of escalation towards a regional war. As well as the genocidal massacre in Gaza, he launched a ground invasion of Lebanon, air strikes against Iran, Yemen and Syria, and then a ground invasion of Syria.
162. The sudden and unexpected collapse of the Assad regime in Syria has changed the regional balance of forces once again. Turkey is a minor capitalist power in terms of the world economy, but it is one which has big regional ambitions. Erdogan has very skilfully played the conflict between US imperialism and Russia to his own advantage.
163. Sensing that Iran and Russia, with whom Erdogan made a deal in Syria in 2016, were otherwise engaged (Russia in Ukraine and Iran in Lebanon), Erdogan decided to back the offensive of the HTS jihadis from Idlib. To everyone’s surprise, that precipitated the complete collapse of the regime. The degree to which it had already been hollowed out by economic sanctions, corruption and sectarianism was much greater than anyone had realised. The current carve up of Syria is the continuation of more than 100 years of imperialist meddling all the way back to the Sykes-Picot agreement.
164. Ultimately, there can be no peace in the Middle East as long as the Palestinian national question is not resolved. But this cannot be achieved under capitalism. The interests of the Zionist ruling class in Israel (backed by the world’s most powerful imperialist power) do not allow for the formation of a genuine homeland for the Palestinians, and even less for the right of return of millions of refugees.
165. From a purely military point of view, the Palestinians cannot defeat Israel, a modern capitalist imperialist power with the most sophisticated military technology and an intelligence service which is second to none. It is also fully backed by US imperialism.
166. So what other forces can the Palestinians rely upon? No confidence can be placed in the reactionary Arab regimes, which pay lip service to the Palestinian cause but which have betrayed it and have collaborated with Israel and imperialism at every step.
167. The only true friends of the Palestinians are to be found in the Arab street – the oppressed masses of workers, peasants, small traders and the urban and rural poor. But their immediate task is to settle accounts with their own reactionary rulers. This poses the question of the abolition of capitalism through the expropriation of the landlords, bankers and capitalists. Without this, the revolution in



North Africa and the Middle East can never succeed.

168. A powerful working class exists in the region, in Egypt and Turkey above all, but also in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and Jordan. A successful uprising in any of these countries, bringing the working class to power, would change the balance of forces. It would thus create conditions more favourable for the liberation of the Palestinians, and would prepare the way for a revolutionary war against Israel, which would inevitably flow from the whole situation.
169. The state of Israel and its Zionist ruling class can only be defeated by splitting the country's population along class lines. At the moment, the perspective of a class split in Israel seems distant. However, constant war and strife can eventually lead a section of the Israeli masses to draw the conclusion that the only way to peace is through a just solution of the Palestinian national question.
170. Without a perspective of the revolutionary socialist transformation of society, endless wars, waged by reactionary governments with imperialist powers pulling the strings, will solve nothing. Under the rule of imperialism, temporary ceasefires and peace agreements will merely prepare the way for new wars. But the general instability that is both the cause of wars and their consequence will create the conditions for a revolutionary movement of the masses in the next period.
171. The Palestinian revolution will triumph as a socialist revolution and as part of a general uprising of the mass of poor workers and peasants against the reactionary regimes in the region, or it will not triumph at all. The countries of the Middle East and North Africa possess colossal untapped resources which could guarantee a thriving and prosperous society. Instead of this, the entire history of the Middle East and North Africa following so-called independence from direct imperialist rule has been nothing but a nightmare for the majority of the people. The bourgeoisie has shown itself to be incapable of solving any of the fundamental problems.
172. A most pernicious role has been played by the Stalinists who based themselves on the false theory of 'two stages', which artificially separates the proletarian revolution from the so-called bourgeois-democratic revolution. This reactionary theory has led to one disastrous defeat after another, creating conditions for the rise of reactionary and oppressive dictatorial rule and the madness of religious fundamentalism in one country after another. Only a victorious socialist revolution can put an end to this nightmare.
173. Only a socialist federation can solve the national question once and for



all. All peoples, Palestinians and Israeli Jews, but also Kurds, Armenians and all the others, would have the right to live in peace within such a socialist federation. The economic potential of the region would be realised to the full in a common socialist plan of production. Unemployment and poverty would be a thing of the past. On that basis alone, the old national and religious hatreds could be overcome. They would be like the memory of a bad dream.

174. This is the only real hope for the peoples of the Middle East.

175. ARMS RACE AND MILITARISM

176. Historically, any significant change in the relative strength of different imperialist powers tended to be settled through war, chiefly the two world wars of the 20th century. Today, the existence of nuclear weapons rules out an open world war in the coming period.

177. Capitalists go to war to secure markets, fields of investment and spheres of influence. A world war today would lead to the wholesale destruction of infrastructure and life, from which no power would benefit. It would require a crazed Bonapartist leader ruling over a major nuclear power for a world war to take place. That would only be possible on the basis of decisive defeats of the working class. That is not the perspective ahead of us.

178. Nevertheless, the conflict between imperialist powers, which reflects the struggle to assert a new redivision of the planet, dominates the world situation. This is expressed in several regional wars, which are causing massive destruction and killing tens of thousands of people, as well as in trade and diplomatic tensions, which are growing all the time. Last year saw the highest number of wars since the end of the Second World War.

179. This has led to a new arms race, the growth of militarism in western countries, and increased pressure to rebuild, re-equip and modernise the armed forces everywhere. The United States is set to spend an estimated \$1.7 trillion over 30 years to revamp its nuclear arsenal. It has now decided to deploy cruise missiles on German soil for the first time since the Cold War.

180. There is strong pressure on all NATO countries to increase their defence spending. China has announced a 7.2 percent increase in defence spending. As a result of the war, in 2024 Russia's military spending grew by 40 percent, reaching 32 percent of total federal spending and 6.68 percent of GDP. Global military expenditure in 2023 reached \$2.44 trillion, a 6.8 percent increase from 2022. This was the largest increase since 2009 and the highest level ever recorded.

181. These are eye-watering amounts of money, not to speak of the wasted la-



bour power and technological development, which could have been used for socially necessary purposes. This is a point that communists must stress in our propaganda and agitation.

182. It would be simplistic to say that capitalists are embarking on a new arms race in order to boost economic growth. In fact, arms expenditure is inherently inflationary and any effect on the economy will be short-term and offset by cuts in other sectors. In the long run, it constitutes a drain on the productive economy by syphoning off surplus value. Rather, it is the conflict between imperialist powers for the redivision of the world that is fuelling the increase in military spending. Capitalism in its imperialist stage inevitably leads to conflicts between the powers and ultimately to war.
183. The struggle against militarism and imperialism has become a central point of our epoch. We are staunch opponents of imperialist wars and imperialism, but we are not pacifists. We must stress that the only way to guarantee peace is the abolition of the capitalist system which breeds war.

184. EUROPEAN CAPITALISM'S SCRAMBLE TO REARM

185. In the case of Europe, the drive towards militarism and arms spending is the result of the strengthening of Russian imperialism as it emerges victorious from the war in Ukraine, the withdrawal of US military sup-

port, and the attempt of European powers to show they still play a role in the world arena.

186. Russia's military expenditure for 2024 was around 13.1 trillion rubles (\$145.9 billion), which accounts for 6.68 percent of the nation's GDP. This marks an increase of over 40 percent compared to the previous year. When adjusted for purchasing power parity, this figure approximates \$462 billion.
187. Meanwhile, Europe has substantially increased its military spending by 50 percent in nominal terms since 2014, reaching a collective total of \$457 billion in 2024. In this case, adjusting the Russian figure for purchasing power makes sense, since what we are comparing is the amount of tanks, artillery pieces or ammunition that each dollar can purchase, in Russia and in Europe. In other words, Russia is outspending the whole of Europe when it comes to the military.
188. Russia is also out-producing all of NATO, including the US, in terms of ammunition, rockets, and tanks. According to NATO intelligence estimates, Russia is producing 3 million artillery munitions a year. The whole of NATO, including the US, has the capacity to produce only 1.2 million, less than half the Russian figure.
189. Furthermore, the war in Ukraine has completely transformed the way warfare is conducted. As is always the case, war allows for the testing of new technologies and techniques in



real-life conditions, which are rapidly spurred on and adjusted to the battlefield. Combatant armies are forced to quickly develop means and tactics to counteract them. We have seen the introduction of large numbers of drones (aerial, land and sea), electronic surveillance and jamming techniques, etc.

190. The only armies to have real-life experience of these new methods are those of Ukraine and Russia. The West is seriously lagging behind in all these fields. The Ukraine war has dramatically shifted the military balance of forces in Russia's favour.
191. That does not mean that Russia has an interest in invading Europe, nor even part of it. That so-called threat has been massively hyped up by the ruling class in order to justify a large increase in military spending and in an attempt to reduce public opposition. Russia has no interest in invading western Ukraine – which would be a far more costly and taxing enterprise than the present Russian military campaign – let alone in invading NATO countries.
192. The threat from the point of view of European capitalism is not really that of a Russian invasion or an open military conflict between Russian and European armies. That would be very costly for both sides. Furthermore, it would involve two sides possessing nuclear weapons, a very dangerous proposition.
193. The real threat for European imperialism in crisis is to have been abandoned or downgraded by the world's largest imperialist power, while at the same time being neighbours with another powerful imperialist, which is emerging massively strengthened from the present war.
194. Russia has a lot of clout (militarily and in terms of energy resources) and is already exercising a powerful pull on Europe's political scene. Countries like Hungary and Slovakia have already broken ranks with the Atlanticist orientation of the dominant European powers. In others, there are rising political forces moving in a similar direction to one degree or another (Germany, Austria, Romania, Czech Republic, Italy).
195. What European imperialism is defending is not the lives and homes of the people of Europe, but the profits of its multinational companies and the predatory imperialist ambitions of its capitalist ruling classes. Russia is a rival of German capitalism in Eastern and Central Europe. Russia is a rival of French imperialism in Africa.
196. The long drawn-out crisis of European capitalism means that once the protection of the US is withdrawn, it will be unable to stand on its own. It is threatened with being carved up between the rival interests of the US, Russia and China. Centrifugal tendencies are becoming ever stronger, as each capitalist class begins to assert



its own national interests. It is not at all excluded that these tendencies will eventually lead to a break up of the European Union.

197. THE WORLD ECONOMY: FROM GLOBALISATION TO TRADE WARS AND PROTECTIONISM

198. Trump's introduction of wide-ranging tariffs on 2 April marked a turning point in the world economy. But the process of the slowing down of globalisation and the move towards protectionism had started earlier.
199. The worldwide recession of 2008 was a turning point in the capitalist crisis. In the period immediately preceding the crisis, the world economy was growing at around 4 percent a year. Between the 2008 crisis and the 2020 pandemic shock, it grew at only 3 percent. Before Trump's tariffs it was already trending at around 2 percent, the lowest growth rate in three decades.
200. In fact, the world economy has never recovered from the 2008 recession. There was a massive bailout of the banks at the time, a desperate measure to save the financial sector. States in Europe accumulated massive debts and budget deficits and were forced to implement austerity measures. The working class was being made to pay the price for the crisis of capitalism.
201. The ruling class, in a panic, responded with a massive programme of quantitative easing, the injection of a vast amount of money into the economy, and the unprecedented lowering of interest rates to zero or even negative. That did not produce a recovery, however, as households were also saddled with debt. There was no productive field of investment in production, so the excess liquidity inflated bubbles in share prices, in crypto currencies, etc.
202. The austerity measures implemented by governments everywhere led to mass movements around the world in 2011: the revolution in North Africa and the Middle East, the Occupy movement in the US, the 'indignados' movement in Spain, the Syntagma square movement in Greece, etc.
203. That reflected a growing discontent against the capitalist system which was making the working class pay for the bank bailout measures and this led to the discrediting of all bourgeois institutions. That change in consciousness – as we have seen – found a political expression in the rise of a new type of left reformism around 2015: Podemos, Syriza, Corbyn, Mélenchon, Sanders and the 'progressive governments' in Latin America.
204. The masses were attracted to them because of their apparently radical opposition to austerity. That process came to an end when the limitations of reformism were exposed: with the betrayal of the Syriza government in Greece; Sanders' support for Clinton; the collapse of Corbynism; and



the entry of Podemos into a coalition government in Spain.

205. In the countries dominated by imperialism, we saw mass uprisings and insurrections (in Puerto Rico, Haiti, Ecuador, Chile, Sudan, Colombia, etc.). The mass mobilisations during the struggle for a republic in Catalonia in 2017 and 2019 were also part of this same general trend.
206. The lack of leadership, however, meant that none of them ended in the overthrow of capitalism, which would have been possible.
207. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 represented an external shock to the economy at a time when it was already heading for a new recession (having never fully recovered from the 2008 crisis). This finally pushed the world economy over the edge.
208. Again, in panic, the ruling class resorted to desperate measures to prevent a social explosion. In the advanced capitalist countries, workers were paid by the state to stay at home at a massive cost to the public finances, which were already saddled with debt from the previous crisis.
209. Over the last 15 years, repeated attempts to kick-start the world economy by injecting massive amounts of liquidity into the system through quantitative easing, record-low interest rates (2009-21), and other similar panic measures have abysmally failed to achieve any substantial economic growth. The capitalists, in spite of being showered with money, have not been investing.
210. The key factor was that capitalists need a market where they can sell their products in order to realise profits. Massive accumulation of debt means that households and businesses are unable to drive consumption.
211. The world's combined household, state and corporate debt has reached around \$313 trillion, or 330 percent of world GDP, up from around \$210 trillion a decade ago.
212. Debt is a reflection of the fact that the limits of the system have been stretched to their breaking point and now acts like an enormous barrier to any further development. The combination of high levels of state debt and higher interest rates has already tipped a series of dominated countries over the edge. More will follow.
213. The pandemic also had an impact on consciousness, revealing the inability of the capitalist system of private profit to deal with a health emergency, and how profits came before human life for the pharma giants.
214. In the 1990s and 2000s, there was a certain growth in the world economy, although the rate of growth was substantially lower than during the postwar boom of 1948-1973, when there was a significant development of the productive forces. On top of this, the economic growth in the pe-



riod leading up to 2008 was based on the expansion of credit and ‘globalisation’. This allowed the system to go beyond its limits, partially and for a period of time. Globalisation meant the expansion of world trade, the lowering of tariff barriers, the cheapening of consumer goods, and the opening up of new markets and fields of investment in countries dominated by imperialism.

215. Now, all those factors have turned into their opposite. The expansion of credit and liquidity have turned into a mountain of debt.
216. Globalisation (the expansion of world trade) was one of the main drivers of economic growth for a whole period after the collapse of Stalinism in Russia, and the restoration of capitalism in China and its integration into the world economy. Instead, what we have now are tariff barriers and trade wars between all the major economic blocs (China, the EU and the US), each one attempting to save their own economy at the expense of the others.
217. In 1991, world trade represented 35 percent of the world’s GDP, a figure which had remained basically unchanged since 1974. It then started a period of sharp growth to a peak of 61 percent in 2008. Since then it has remained stagnant.
218. Before the recent round of tariffs, the IMF projected world trade would grow by just 3.2 percent a year over the medium term, a pace well below its annual average growth rate of 2000-2019 of 4.9 percent. The expansion of world trade is no longer a driver of economic growth as it was in the past. Now, the whole process has gone into reverse.
219. The tendency towards protectionism, a symptom of the crisis of capitalism, had been building up for a period of time. In 2023, governments worldwide introduced 2,500 protectionist measures (tax incentives, targeted subsidies and trade restrictions), triple the number from five years earlier.
220. During the first Trump presidency, the US adopted an aggressive protectionist stance, not only against China, but also against the EU, a policy which continued under Biden. Biden enacted a series of laws (CHIPS, the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, etc.) and measures aimed at benefiting US production at the expense of imports from the rest of the world. Since the re-election of Donald Trump, all the trends towards protectionism have sharply accelerated and have now led to an open trade war.
221. The rise of protectionism and implementation of tariffs will act as yet another shock to the global economy, following on from the pandemic and the Ukraine war. This will add to the persistent inflationary pressures in the economy – on top of deficit financing, military spending, demographic changes, and climate change – whilst also sapping demand.



222. However, the economic situation is very precarious. The potential exists for a new slump in the coming period, and even a possible depression cannot be ruled out.

223. TRUMP'S TARIFFS

224. Trump's sharp turn towards protectionism and open trade war with China is a symptom of the crisis of US capitalism. It means recognising that US manufacturing companies cannot compete in the global market without state intervention. At the same time, protectionism is a way for rival capitalist countries to make other countries pay the price for the crisis. 'America First' necessarily means 'everyone else last'.

225. With his wide ranging protectionist measures Trump is pursuing several aims. 1) To penalise the import of manufactured goods and thus to bring manufacturing jobs back to the US. 2) To stop the rise of China as an economic rival. 3) To use the proceeds from tariffs to alleviate the US budget deficit, so that he can retain tax cuts. 4) To use tariffs as a bargaining chip in negotiations with other countries in order to extract political and economic concessions.

226. It is true that some companies have announced investments in the US as a way to circumvent tariffs and keep access to the US market (the largest consumer market in the world). But setting up new factories is a process which will take some time and any

gain in terms of new jobs is likely to be offset by the short-term impact of tariffs on supply chains.

227. Today, after 30 years of globalisation, supply chains are extremely elongated, with different countries specialising in different parts of the productive process. The automobile industry in the US, Mexico and Canada is extremely integrated, with parts crossing borders several times before being assembled in stages in different countries. Any move towards shortening supply lines will have an immediate disruptive impact on the economy, which will lead to products becoming more expensive or even scarce in some cases. The uncertainty created by Trump's use of tariffs as a negotiating tool also has a detrimental impact on investment decisions.

228. The US and Chinese economies are deeply intertwined and mutually dependent. For the US, there is currently no viable substitute for Chinese manufacturing – Chinese goods are both affordable and of high quality. Efforts to remove them from the US market, as pursued by Trump, would likely inflict serious economic harm long before any revival of American manufacturing could begin, if it ever materialises at all.

229. Any attempt to disentangle this relationship will have negative consequences for the world economy as a whole. Let's remember that after 1929 it was a general turn towards protec-



tionism which tipped the world from economic recession into a depression. Global trade volume fell by 25 percent between 1929 and 1933 and a large part of that was the direct result of increased trade barriers.

230. For a whole period of time, globalisation allowed the capitalist system to partially and temporarily go beyond the limits of the nation state. Protectionism represents an attempt to hem the productive forces back into the narrow confines of the nation state, in order to reassert the domination of US imperialism over others. As Trotsky warned in the 1930s:
231. “On both sides of the Atlantic no little mental energy is wasted on efforts to solve the fantastic problem of how to drive the crocodile back into the chicken egg. The ultra-modern economic nationalism is irrevocably doomed by its own reactionary character; it retards and lowers the productive forces of man.” (Nationalism and Economic Life, 1934)
232. As was to be expected, trade union leaders everywhere are responding to protectionism by lining up behind their own ruling classes ‘in defence of jobs’ in their own countries. Communists must stand on an internationalist, independent class point of view. The enemy of the working class is the ruling class, chiefly our own at home, not the workers of other countries.
233. Faced with factory closures, we should advance the slogan of occupation. In-

stead of yet more state bail-outs of private companies, we demand the opening of the books and nationalisation under workers’ control. If factories cannot work for profit under capitalism, they should be expropriated, re-tooled and repurposed to fulfil socially useful purposes, under a democratic plan of production. Neither free trade nor protectionism is in the interest of the working class. These are just two different economic policies with which the ruling class attempts to deal with the crises of capitalism. Our alternative is to overthrow the system that causes them.

234. CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY OF BOURGEOIS INSTITUTIONS

235. The crisis of capitalism, as an economic system which is now unable to develop the productive forces to any significant degree, and consequently unable to improve the living standards from one generation to the next, has led to a deep and growing crisis of legitimacy of all bourgeois political institutions.
236. There is an obscene polarisation of wealth, with a small handful of billionaires increasing their assets, while a growing number of working-class people find it more difficult to make ends meet and are faced with austerity cuts, the purchasing power of wages eaten up by inflation, increased energy bills, a housing crisis, etc.
237. The media, the politicians, the established political parties, parliaments,



the judiciary, all are seen as representing the interests of a small, privileged elite, making decisions to defend their own narrow selfish interests rather than serving the needs of the many.

238. This is extremely significant as the ruling class in normal times rules through these institutions, which are generally accepted and seen as representing 'the will of the majority'. Now that is being questioned by ever growing layers of society.
239. Rather than the normal mechanism of bourgeois democracy, which serves to soften the class contradictions, the idea of direct action to achieve one's aims is becoming increasingly accepted. An article in *Le Monde* warned Macron in France that by preventing the party with most elected parliamentarians from forming a government, he risked the people drawing the conclusion that elections were of no use. In the US, one in four believe that political violence may be justified to "save" the country, up from 15 percent a year earlier.
240. The rise of anti-establishment demagogues is an indication of this erosion of the legitimacy of bourgeois democracy and its institutions. In the past, when a right-wing government became discredited, it would be replaced by a social-democratic 'left' government, and when that became discredited, it would be replaced by a conservative government. That is no longer an automatic process.
241. Instead, there are violent swings to the left and to the right, which are characterised in the media as the growth of 'political extremism'. But the strengthening of the extremes in politics is merely a way of expressing the process of social and political polarisation, which in turn is a reflection of a sharpening of the class struggle. The resulting collapse of the political centre is what fills the ruling class with terror. They wish to stop it by all means at their disposal but they are powerless to do so.
242. The reason for this is not hard to see. Left and right governments today basically carry out the same policies of cuts and austerity. This leads to the general discrediting of politics, a steady rise of abstention and the emergence of all sorts of third party alternatives, often of an ephemeral nature. Right-wing demagogues have been able to capitalise on an existing anti-establishment mood also because of the inability of the official 'left' to offer any real alternative.
243. The hue and cry from the liberal capitalist establishment about the 'danger of fascism' and the 'threat of the far right' serves to drum up support for lesser-evilism, the idea that 'we must all unite to defend democracy', that we should 'defend the Republic'. This at a time when in most countries it is the liberals who are in power carrying out attacks on the working class, whipping up militarism... and attacking democratic rights.



244. Thus, Trump is called a 'fascist' or an 'authoritarian' when he pursues a policy of expelling non-citizens for their support for Palestine. What are we then to call the governments of European countries which have banned and brutally repressed pro-Palestine demonstrations? What do we call it when in Germany and France non-citizens are being arrested and deported for supporting Palestine?
245. The liberals are using the courts to implement completely undemocratic measures to bar politicians they do not like from standing in elections (like Le Pen in France) or, as in the case of Romania, to cancel elections when they do not like the result! And then they turn around and call for 'unity to defend democracy' and for a 'cordon sanitaire against the far right'.
246. This is a criminal policy, which in fact serves to increase the support for right-wing demagogues who can then say: 'See, right and left, they are all the same.'
247. Communists will fight any reactionary measure against the interests of the working class and against democratic rights, but it would be fatal to be seen in any way to support 'democracy' in general (which means support for the capitalist state) or to mix banners with the liberals when they attack right-wing demagogues.
248. In reality, the appeal of right-wing demagogues will always reveal its illusory character to the degree that it comes into conflict with the real situation. Trump is in power already in the US. He has made many promises. He is riding on the expectations of millions of people who think that he is really going to 'Make America Great Again'. But this is a pure illusion. For working-class people, making America great again means decent, well-paid jobs. It means that they can get to the end of the month without being forced to work two or three different jobs, or having to sell blood plasma to make ends meet.
249. There are strong illusions amongst millions of people in the United States that Trump will bring back the 'good old days' of the post-war period. If there is one thing which is certain it is that this is not going to happen. The crisis of capitalism means that a return to the golden age of the post-war boom, or the roaring 1920s, is ruled out today.
250. It is not ruled out that, for a short period of time, some of these measures – for example, tariffs which promote industrial development in the United States at the expense of other countries – might have a little bit of an impact. Many will also give Trump the benefit of the doubt for a period of time. He can also use the argument that it is the establishment, the 'deep state', which is not allowing him to carry out his policies.
251. But once reality sinks in and these illusions are dispelled, the deep-seated



anti-establishment mood that propelled Trump to power will lead to a sharp shift towards the opposite side of the political spectrum. We could see an equally sharp and violent swing of the pendulum to the left.

252. There is an article by Trotsky called 'If America Should Go Communist', where he talks about the American temperament which he describes as "energetic and violent": "It would be contrary to the American tradition to make a major change without choosing sides and cracking heads."
253. The American worker is practical and demands concrete results. He is prepared to take action to get things done. Farrell Dobbs, the leader of the great Minneapolis Teamsters strike in 1934, went straight from being a Republican to being a Trotskyist leader. In his account of the strike, he explains why. To him, the Trotskyists were the ones offering the most practical and effective solutions in dealing with the problems the workers faced.

254. AN EXPLOSIVE SITUATION: RADICALISATION OF THE YOUTH

255. The truth is that the world situation is pregnant with revolutionary potential. The insurrectionary wave of 2019-2020 was partially cut across by the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, but the conditions which triggered it have not gone away. In 2022, the uprising in Sri Lanka brought down the president with

the masses entering the presidential palace. The mass strikes against the pension counter-reform in France in 2023 put the government on the ropes. In 2024, the masses in Kenya, led by the revolutionary youth, stormed parliament and forced the withdrawal of the finance bill. In Bangladesh, a movement of the student youth which was faced with brutal repression led to a nationwide uprising and the overthrow of the hated Hasina regime.

256. A common feature in all of these movements is the leading role played by the youth. Anyone under the age of 30 has lived all their politically conscious life in a situation marked by the 2008 crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the massacre in Gaza.
257. More recently we have seen significant mass movements in Turkey, Serbia and Greece. In the case of Greece, the rage against the cover up of the railway disaster at Tempi, combined with the accumulated anger at the mass impoverishment resulting from the permanent austerity and deep impasse of Greek capitalism, led to a massive general strike and the biggest protest demonstrations in the country since the fall of the dictatorship. The massive character of the general strike, which involved not only the working class but also other layers of society (small shopkeepers, etc.), shows the real balance of forces in modern capitalist society. When the



working class moves, it can pull behind it all oppressed layers.

258. In Serbia, the protest movement over the collapse of Novi Sad station canopy has created a revolutionary crisis, with the largest protest demonstration in the country's history. The students have played a decisive role, occupying the universities and organising through student plenums (assemblies). The protests have already brought down the government. The students are consciously trying to spread the movement to the working class and the people at large with the formation of zborovi, mass assemblies in towns and cities as well as in some workplaces.
259. Both these movements bring out two key features of the current situation: the enormous potential power of the working class and its dominant social weight on the one hand, and the extreme weakness of the subjective factor.
260. On top of this, layers of the youth have also been radicalised over issues of democratic rights, the mass women's movement against violence and discrimination (Mexico, Spain), for or in defence of abortion rights (Argentina, Chile, Ireland, Poland), for same sex marriage (Ireland), the mass movement against police brutality against black people (US and Britain), etc.
261. The climate crisis has also become a radicalising factor for this genera-

tion of young people who feel very strongly, and quite rightly, that unless things change radically, life on Earth is threatened and that the system is to blame.

262. The hypocrisy and double standards of imperialism regarding the massacre in Gaza, the so-called 'international rules' and police repression of the Palestine solidarity movement have opened their eyes to the nature of the capitalist state, the capitalist media and international institutions.
263. A growing section of the youth identifies with communist ideas as the most radical alternative against the capitalist system. This is not a majority, not even amongst the youth, but certainly this is a significant development.
264. The collapse of Stalinism is now 35 years behind us, so for this generation the ruling class propaganda about 'the failure of socialism' has very little meaning. What they are worried about and have suffered directly as a result of is the failure of capitalism!

265. CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

266. There is an accumulation of combustible material around the world. The crisis of the capitalist system in all its manifestations has provoked one revolutionary uprising after another. The so-called liberal world order, which shaped the world for decades, is crumbling before our eyes. The turn to protectionism and



trade wars is creating enormous economic turbulence.

267. The question that we need to ask ourselves is not whether there will be revolutionary movements in the period opening up in front of us. That is certain. The question is whether these will end up in a victory for the working class?
268. We have seen a number of revolutionary movements and insurrections over the last 15 years. These have demonstrated the enormous revolutionary elan and power of the masses once they start to move. They have been able to overcome brutal repression, states of emergency, information blackouts, and the most repressive regimes. But, at the end of the day, none of them have led the working class to power.
269. What was missing, on every single occasion, was a revolutionary leadership able to take the movement to its logical conclusion. The 2011 Arab revolution ended in repressive Bonapartist regimes (Egypt, Tunisia) or even worse, reactionary civil wars (Libya and Syria). The Chilean uprising was channelled back into the safe channel of bourgeois constitutionalism. The Sudanese revolution also ended in a wholly reactionary civil war.
270. Trotsky wrote in *The Transitional Program* that “the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.” His words are now truer than ever. The subjective factor – that is, an organisation of revolutionary cadres rooted in the working class – is extremely weak when compared to the colossal tasks posed by history. For decades, we have been struggling against the tide and have been thrown back by powerful objective currents.
271. This inevitably means that the coming revolutionary crises will not be solved in the short term. Therefore, we are facing a protracted period of ups and downs, advances and defeats. But through all these processes, the working class will learn and its vanguard will be strengthened. At last, the tide of history is beginning to flow in our direction and we will be able to swim with the tide, not against it.
272. Our task is to participate, side by side with the masses of the working class, and connect the finished programme of socialist revolution with the unfinished yearning of the most advanced elements for a fundamental revolutionary change.
273. The founding of the Revolutionary Communist International in 2024 was a very important step and we should not underestimate what we have achieved: an international organisation firmly based on Marxist theory. In the recent period our numbers have grown significantly. Nonetheless, we must maintain a sense of proportion: our forces are still completely inadequate for the tasks that lie ahead.



274. The weakness of the subjective factor means inevitably that in the next period the radicalisation of the masses will express itself in the rise and fall of new left reformist formations and leaders. Some of them might even use very radical language, but all will come up against the basic limitations of reformism: their inability to pose the basic question of the overthrow of the capitalist system and the coming to power of the working class. For this reason betrayal is inherent in reformism. But for a period of time, some of these formations and leaders will generate enthusiasm and will get mass support.
275. There needs to be a sense of urgency in the building of the organisation everywhere. It is not the same to have 100, 1,000 or 10,000 members when mass uprisings erupt again. An organisation of 1,000 trained cadres at the beginning of the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela, or an organisation of 5,000 cadres with roots in the working class when Corbyn won the leadership of the Labour Party in Britain, could have transformed the situation. At the very least, with a correct policy and approach to the mass movement, they could have grown into a significant force within the working-class movement, becoming a point of reference for wider layers.
276. In the right conditions, in the heat of events, even a relatively small organisation can be transformed into a much larger one and fight to conquer the leadership of the masses. That is in the future. The task now is the patient work of recruiting, and above all training and educating the cadres, particularly amongst working-class and student youth.
277. An organisation that is firmly rooted in the masses and armed with Marxist theory will be able to respond quickly to the rapid shifts and turns in the situation. But a revolutionary leadership cannot be improvised once revolutionary events break out, it must be prepared in advance. That is the most urgent task facing us today. On our success or failure the entire situation must ultimately depend. This idea must be the main driving force behind all our work, sacrifice and efforts. With the necessary determination and persistence, we can and will succeed.

Approved by the IEC,
4 June 2025

CONTRIBUTION BY BRAZILIAN SECTION TO IEC DEBATE ON 4 JUNE 2025

Dear comrades of the IEC,

We present here a contribution to the debate on the document “*The world upside down – a system in crisis*” sent by the IS for the preparation of our next World Congress. We understand that because we expose general considerations about the text, the best format to present our opinions is this contribution, rather than a series of specific amendments.

This is because the central analysis of the document is based on the dispute between countries, on the Nation States, on the possible pretensions of their rulers, which is close, in our opinion, to what is commonly called “geopolitics”, a theory that, in essence, opposes the world unity of the class struggle and replaces it with conflict between nations. Although there are, of course, conflicts between the different national bourgeoisies, the central conflict in

the world remains that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

We consider that the analysis of the international political situation and the tasks of the communists, the political basis for convening the World Congress, must be centered on the developments of the class struggle in the world, on the world unity of the class struggle, the true motor of history, in the face of a new international situation that has definitively put an end to the order established after the Second World War, the order of Yalta and Potsdam.

In general, we have already expressed our analysis of the new world situation in the Political Report of the Central Committee of the OCI to the Congress of the Brazilian section, which was distributed by the IS to the members of the IEC on April 24, together with the exchange of correspondence and the considerations of the IS. At the last meeting of the OCI CC we agreed to publish small amendments to clarify and make more precise our analyses on



the question of the character of the Trump administration. These clarifications are expressed in this current contribution.

We also consider that the text has manifest inconsistencies. The Manifesto launching the RCI states:

The present crisis is not a normal cyclical crisis of capitalism. It is an existential crisis, expressed not only in **the stagnation of the productive forces**, but also in a general crisis of culture, morality, politics and religion. (our emphasis)

But if in paragraph 4 of the World Perspectives document it is written, and we agree with this statement, that *“In the final analysis, **the inability of the capitalist system to develop the productive forces is the cause of the crisis.**”* (our emphasis), in paragraph 230, it says that *“The crisis of capitalism, as an economic system which is now unable **to develop the productive forces to any significant degree,**”* (our emphasis). Either capitalism is incapable of developing the productive forces at the present time, or it develops them even if not “to any significant degree”.

Regarding the war in Ukraine, the text states that in the *“The war in Ukraine – where a humiliating defeat for US-NATO is being prepared”*. This is after leaders of the RCI published texts where they claim that Russia has already won the war, that it has a “formidable” army, etc. This after three years of war in which Russia failed to achieve any of its publicly expressed goals by invading Ukraine in 2022. In addition, the document mistakenly states that

“While Russia is not an economic colossus comparable with China, it has established a solid economic and technological base.” And further on that *“It has built a powerful army that is a match for the combined forces of the European states”* And that it has created a *“it has built a formidable defence industry that is outproducing both the United States and Europe in tanks, artillery, ammunition, missiles and drones;”*.

At another time he describes the USSR as a “**rival**” of the USA, when its policy was “peaceful coexistence” and therefore dedicated itself to crushing revolutions all over the world, when the bureaucracy did not rival capitalism, but on the contrary, it was the transmission belt of imperialism within the degenerated workers’ state, it was the effective instrument of capitalist restoration. The contradiction between the workers’ state, even if degenerated, and imperialism was based on the class struggle, the fundamental opposition between the working class and the bourgeoisie, where the collaboration between Stalinism and imperialism was fundamental for the maintenance of imperialism and capitalism and to avoid the expropriation of capital where it could be avoided.

WORLD SITUATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

We consider that the current world economic and political situation, including the emergence of the current Trump administration, is a product of the organic crisis of capital and its development towards barbarism and not a realignment



of the spheres of influence of new and old imperialist countries in the world.

The core of the perspectives text presented by the IS explains that there is a “relative decline” of US imperialism in relation to Russia and, in particular, China. The defense of this thesis takes up a good part of the document, being present mainly in the parts with the subtitles: “Tectonic shifts in world relations”, “A multipolar world?”, “The relative decline of US imperialism”, “Russia’s military clout”, “The rise of China as an imperialist power”, “Balancing between the powers” and “Crisis in Europe”.

We have already held debates in the IEC on the question of imperialism. And we do not intend here to reopen the discussion on the character of the bourgeoisie of China and Russia, whether or not they are imperialist bourgeoisies. However, regardless of this, there are analyses in the WP text on the US, China and Russia relationship with which we do not agree, being present centrally in the following paragraphs:

50. The world situation is dominated by enormous instability in world relations. This is the result of the struggle for world hegemony between the US, the world’s most powerful imperialist power, which is in relative decline, and China, a younger, more dynamic rising imperialist power. We are witnessing a tremendous shift, comparable in scale to the movement of the tectonic plates on the Earth’s crust. Such movements are accompanied by explosions of all sorts. The war in Ukraine – where a humiliating defeat

for US-NATO is being prepared – and the conflict in the Middle East, are expressions of this fact.

51. Trump’s approach to world relations represent an attempt to recognise that the US cannot be the world’s only policeman. In his view, and that of his close collaborators, the attempt of the US to maintain hegemony and total domination is extremely costly, impractical and damaging to its core national security interests.

And further on:

55. Trump’s foreign policy is based on the recognition of the limitations of US power. The consequence of that is an attempt to disentangle America from a series of costly conflicts (Ukraine, Middle East) through deals, in order to rebuild its power and to concentrate on its main rival on the world arena, China.

In fact, we do not agree with the analysis that the development of the current situation is moving towards a “New World Order” in which the US, China and Russia would share the world, even if in a conflicting way, in zones of influence.

What we think is that the development of the crisis of capital will deepen this situation even more towards the disintegration of the world market and, therefore, a greater crisis of the institutions that the bourgeoisie itself created during its period of development and of the living conditions of the peoples. This will mean more polarization between classes, wars and rev-



olutions and **necessarily political differentiations within the working class that in order to fight is forced to confront the official leaders of the organizations that the class still recognizes as its own.**

The deepening of the capitalist crisis provokes a crisis of domination of the bourgeoisie, with conflicts and divisions within the ruling class internationally. Trump's "economic nationalism" is on the one hand the spasms of a wounded giant as well as having an aspect of demagoguery to try to balance his government "above the classes". From the point of view of capitalism, Trump's policy is meaningless and clashes, in practice, with the world domination of finance capital.

Trump unleashed a completely erratic trade war, with a series of protectionist measures. However, protectionist measures are contrary to the interests of international finance capital, that is, they run counter to the international interests of finance capital that dominates the world economy in the imperialist phase of capitalism, as Lenin explained. That is why there are a number of billionaires who supported him in the election, who begin to distance themselves from him and his politics by criticizing the tariffs and even opposing his politics. One can name dozens of great billionaires who have stepped aside, not to mention those who publicly oppose them such as Warren Buffet and Bill Gates.

The Trump administration has no coherent way out of the capitalist crisis. His government attacks from all sides, but with the central objective of expanding

the exploitation and oppression of the peoples and working classes of different countries, including the USA. The main casualty of the trade war is the international working class.

Trump's actions do not mean a certain tactical retreat by the US, as the IS document implies, on its fronts in Europe and the Middle East, to focus on domination over closer territories (Canada, Mexico, Greenland, the Panama Canal) and, from there, confront China. Moreover, an invasion of Panama would set Latin America on fire, taking Greenland would mean burying NATO and awakening revolutionary movements in Europe (Its only possibility would be to boost, buy, the independence movement that would then "freely" join the US), annexing Canada would provoke a social and political upheaval in Canada and the US, especially in the working class.

In fact, regardless of its economic power (largely favored by the centralization of a totalitarian dictatorship), we do not consider that China is in a position to rival, neither economically nor militarily, the United States. The data, for example, on the Chinese Navy, are illusory. China has more outdated and almost useless ships in a war of proportions, ships, some, that the US no longer even manufactures. We all know that statistics is often the art of torturing numbers so that they say what we want them to say. This is what the US and European governments and press are doing, trumpeting the Chinese and Russian ghost and thus inflating military budgets.



Nor is the prospect that of a “multipolar world”, based on blocs of influence between the US, China and Russia. What is developing worldwide, in our assessment, is the crisis of the disintegration of the world market and the chaos that will deepen the international crisis of capitalism, the march towards barbarism. And this will mean more crises and clashes between the governments of the different countries, but all wrapped in the mantle of international finance capital, which knows no borders and struggles with the existence of nation states and the private ownership of the means of production. This means that the main enemy continues to be the working class, which produces, generates wealth and surplus value, which capital must appropriate if it wants to survive. Which, on the other hand, prepares new explosions of working class struggle around the world.

Regarding the characterization of the Trump administration, we also consider it a mistake to consider it as fascist or Nazi. There is no basis for the development of a fascist regime in the U.S. at this time. However, regarding the characterization of the Trump administration as Bonapartist, the text says:

35. Others have raised the idea that Trump represents a Bonapartist regime. The idea here, again, is to portray Trump as a dictator set on a path to crush the working class. But this form of labelling does not explain anything. In reality, far from attempting to crush the working class, Trump is appealing to it demagogically and trying to appease it. Of course, being

a bourgeois politician he represents interests that are fundamentally opposed to those of the workers. But that does not make him a dictator.

36. It is possible to point to this or that element in the present situation that can be said to be an element of Bonapartism. That may be so. But similar comments could be made of almost any recent bourgeois democratic regime.

37. Merely to contain certain elements of a phenomenon does not yet signify the actual emergence of that phenomenon as such. One could, of course, say there are elements of Bonapartism present in Trumpism. But that is not at all the same as saying a Bonapartist regime actually exists in the United States.

We do not consider Bonapartism to be synonymous with totalitarian dictatorship. There are and have been in history various forms of Bonapartism. Be it the “young Bonapartism” of Bismarck, the “mature Bonapartism” of the Bruening, Papen and Schleicher governments, according to Trotsky. Trotsky analyzed **Bonapartism** as a political phenomenon that occurs in moments of crisis and instability, when the bourgeoisie resorts to an authoritarian government to maintain its domination. He compared Bonapartism to **fascism**, noting that both arise in periods of capitalism’s decadence, but have structural differences.

Trotsky explained that Bonapartism is characterized by the **relative autonomy of the state**, that is, a government that



places itself above social classes, balancing between them to avoid a proletarian revolution. He also analyzed Bonapartism in different historical contexts, including post-oligarchic regimes in Latin America.

As much as Trump wants Caesarist or imperial powers, the correlation of class forces in the US does not allow this. However, presidentialism itself is an element of Bonapartism, in which an individual places himself, in a certain way, above parliament. In the US, the president has the power to legislate based on executive orders, as evidenced by the avalanche of executive orders and measures by Trump since he returned to the White House.

In one of the paragraphs quoted above, the World Perspectives document says that *"In reality, far from attempting to crush the working class, Trump is appealing to it demagogically and trying to appease it."* Placing oneself as a leader above the classes, balancing among them, is precisely one of the characteristics of Bonapartism. In addition, the actions of the Trump administration are of attack and repression of workers. The mass deportation of immigrants is an attack on the international working class that prepares the ground for repressive measures against US workers, as well as the arrest of leaders of demonstrations in solidarity with Palestine, etc. Trump cannot survive without paralyzing and/or crushing the working class and its union organizations, even if they have the character and leadership they currently have.

We consider that the U.S. regime is, in fact, a bourgeois democracy with deep

traits of Bonapartism that tend to be accentuated. This regime was already constituted at the origin of independence from the British empire when it instituted, for the first time in the world, with George Washington, in 1789, a bourgeois regime whose government was not appointed by parliament, but elected externally to Parliament and for even greater control, elected indirectly (Electoral College), to allow, at that time, to maintain the unity of the states that were united in independence.

These Bonapartist traits since the origin of the regime only deepened with the passage of time and as the crisis of capital expressed itself in the class struggle. The Trump administration is clearly seeking to deepen these traits. However, between intention and reality, there is a wide distance and a working class willing to fight along the way.

This willingness to fight is expressed in the last period in the US by the enormous number of strikes, by the victory of the opposition in the auto workers' union (UAW), by the dockers' strike in the East Coast of the USA paralyzing 36 ports, by the strike of Boeing, of the Postal Service, as well as by the countless strikes and demonstrations that have achieved wage increases by the metalworkers, etc. Not to mention the huge demonstrations in defense of Palestine, particularly among the youth.

In any case, the confrontation with the Trump administration can only be done in the struggle for the proletarian revolution. Only the proletariat can solve the tasks facing humanity today. Those who defend



bourgeois democracy in the face of bourgeois governments are defeated in advance. Our defense of democratic freedoms does not imply, indeed it clashes, with the institutions of bourgeois democracy in decay. And the only democracy that deserves and must be defended is proletarian democracy that is the result of the overthrow of capital and the constitution of the workers' state.

MILITARISM, WAR AND PEACE

Regarding the possibility of a World War 3, the text says that Joe Biden carried out “*a dangerous policy of provocation against Russia that brought the USA to the brink of World War Three.*” (our emphasis).

We do not agree that the world was on the brink of World War 3 in 2024, and that therefore a world war was possible. The document itself rules out the possibility of a world war when it says in paragraph 173:

Today, the existence of nuclear weapons rules out an open world war in the coming period.

We believe that what prevents a world war is not the existence of atomic weapons, this would be to justify the policy of “deterrence by the balance of arms”, but rather the non-existence at the world level and within countries, which would potentially be candidates for generalized slaughter, of a relationship of forces between the classes that would allow, in some way to lead the peoples to war without the rulers themselves being confronted with revolutionary crises and without, in fact, in the end posing great possibilities that Mr. Trotsky would be the victor of the war.

Let us remember that after the last world war, despite counterrevolutionary Stalinism, one-sixth of humanity began to live in states (although bureaucratic ones), in which capitalism had been expropriated.

And in the following paragraph:

174. Capitalists go to war to secure markets, fields of investment and spheres of influence. A world war today would lead to the wholesale destruction of infrastructure and life, from which no power would benefit. It would require a crazed Bonapartist leader ruling over a major nuclear power for a world war to take place. That would only be possible on the basis of decisive defeats of the working class. That is not the perspective ahead of us.

We agree that the working class is not defeated in the US, nor internationally. This is the decisive factor that makes it impossible for the capitalists to unleash a new world war. How would it be possible to say that the world was on the brink of World War III without the political conditions for it being given?

On the role of wars for capitalism, the text of the IS argues:

179. It would be simplistic to say that capitalists are embarking on a new arms race in order to boost economic growth. In fact, arms expenditure is inherently inflationary and any effect on the economy will be short-term and offset by cuts in other sectors. In the long run, it constitutes a



drain on the productive economy by syphoning off surplus value. Rather, it is the conflict between imperialist powers for the redivision of the world that is fuelling the increase in military spending. Capitalism in its imperialist stage inevitably leads to conflicts between the powers and ultimately to war.

We understand this differently. One of the functions of militarism and the expanded production of armaments (Destructive Forces), for capitalism, is to boost the economy through the arms industry that moves a large production chain and works as a “reserve engine” to boost the economy in the face of the crisis. The other is internal policy to control the working class, to carry out the “National Union” to continue and expand the exploitation of the class. And, obviously, we all agree that *“Capitalism in its imperialist phase inevitably leads to conflicts between the powers and, ultimately, to war”*.

Military production needs a justification for the billions invested in weapons, bombs, tanks, fighter jets, drones, etc. To a large extent, the so-called Cold War was this justification after World War II for the escalation of military spending, even though there was an agreement between imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy for peaceful coexistence. Today, localized wars, carried out or driven by imperialism, is where this armament is dumped. And the propaganda of the bourgeois press and governments, of major external rivals that threaten a new world war for the redistribution of the world, is used as a justifica-

tion for the escalation of military spending in the world.

In addition, the text lacks the practical tasks of building the RCI. It is not enough just to point out the lack of the subjective factor for the victory of future revolutions and our urgent task of building it. The important thing in analyzing the national or international political situation is to define and specify our tasks in the coming period.

In this sense, we propose that the IEC evaluate a complementary resolution for the World Congress to relaunch the campaign against imperialism and militarism in the face of the new political situation opened in the world and the offensive of the Trump administration. A campaign that has as its axis the “struggle against wars and capitalism, for the expulsion of imperialism, we are all worker brothers”, linked to the main demands and needs of the working class and the oppressed peoples of the world. A campaign that, in addition to political initiatives of propaganda and practices of all kinds in each section, appropriate to its context, seeks internationally unified initiatives, which could culminate in an international conference (Hybrid or not) next year.

We recall here the great results of the internationally promoted campaign “Are you a communist? Get organized!”

With this initiative we would take a great step towards the youth and the working class on an international scale and put the RCI in a place that is an urgent necessity derived from the international situation and our vocation to fight for Humanity



against the regime of private ownership of the great means of production.

We could point out considerations on some other aspects of the document presented by the IS, but we consider that we present here, in this written contribution, the central issues to deepen the debate at the meeting of June 4.

We hope to contribute to the discussions in the IEC to have the best preparatory document for our World Congress, to promote the collective construction of the RCI, with unified action in the class struggle in the face of the new convulsive political situation opened in the world.

Fraternal greetings,

Alex Minoru, Caio Dezorzi,
Luiz Bicalho, Serge Goulart,
May 26, 2025

IS REPLY TO BRAZILIAN IEC MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTION

We thank the Brazilian IEC members for raising a number of important points for discussion. Disagreements, if handled properly, can serve to sharpen our understanding and raise the political level of all comrades.

First a note on procedure. It is clear from their contribution that the comrades disagree with the central points of the analysis in the draft World Perspectives document. Therefore it would have been better if instead of just sending a written contribution, they had written an alternative document or statement. It is so that it can be voted on at the world congress, which is the highest decision-making body of the RCI, that the IEC decided to circulate the written contribution to all members as part of the discussion, together with this IS reply.

The main points in the comrades' contribution are dealt with in the actual World Perspectives draft, but there are a number of questions that we would like to develop.

ARE WORLD RELATIONS "GEOPOLITICS"?

The comrades object to the fact that our document spends a lot of time dealing with changes in world relations and the conflicts between countries. They say this is an approach which they describe as "close to geopolitics, a theory which, in essence, is counterposed to the world unity of the class struggle and replaces it by the conflict between nations". In contrast they argue that the "main conflict in the world remains that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat".

Of course, we do agree that the class struggle is the motor force of history, and that is dealt with in the document. However, we make no apologies for concentrating a large part of the document on world relations, as we think that one of the main features of the current situation, which is bound to have a profound effect on the development of the class struggle, is precisely the realignment in the relations between powers, something the comrades disagree with.



Lenin and Trotsky, and Marx and Engels before them, spent a great deal of time studying the relations and conflicts between nations. Lenin's *Imperialism* deals precisely with the reasons for the First World War, which was the result of the struggle between different imperialist powers to carve up markets, spheres of influence and fields of investment.

Was the First World War caused by the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat? Only *in the last instance, and in the last analysis*, could one say that. And even then, it would not explain why the powers went to war. The reason for the war was the conflict between old imperialist powers, which had risen to domination in the previous period, and new imperialist powers. For the latter powers, the development of the productive forces strained against the national market. They therefore needed to carve out their own part in the world division of markets and spheres of influence.

Lenin talks of an "intense struggle for the division and the redivision of the world" because "the only conceivable basis under capitalism for the division of spheres of influence, interests, colonies, etc., is a calculation of the strength of those participating, their general economic, financial, military strength, etc. And the strength of these participants in the division does not change to an equal degree, for the even development of different undertakings, trusts, branches of industry, or countries is impossible under capitalism."

Trotsky spent quite a lot of time in the inter-war period analysing the decline of Europe and the rise of the United States, for instance in his speech on Europe and America. This was also the central plank of his world perspectives lead off at the Third Congress of the Communist International (see: *Report on the World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International*).

No one thought of accusing Lenin and Trotsky of dismissing the class struggle or of engaging in geopolitics.

In fact, the problem is not so much about "geopolitics", but rather that the Brazilian IEC comrades disagree with our analysis of world relations *because they do not agree that China and Russia are imperialist powers*. We have dealt with that question extensively in a document originally written by the IS in 2016, and which was approved by the IEC (see: *Imperialism today and the character of Russia and China*).

The comrades do not agree that there is "a realignment of the spheres of influence between old and new imperialist powers in the world". They disagree that we are "in the direction of a 'new world order' in which the US, China and Russia divide the world, even though through conflict, in spheres of influence". They also reject the idea that Trump's foreign policy represents "a certain tactical retrenchment of the US", and do not consider that "China is in a position to rival the US".

That is, they disagree with the central analysis of the International about the world situation, one which has already been dis-



cussed at the world congress in 2023 and at the founding conference of the RCI in 2024. These are not minor or secondary differences.

We consider that the comrades' position is in contradiction with the observable facts. To give just one example. The comrades' contribution dismisses the idea that Trump intends to strengthen the position of US imperialism in its near abroad in order to deal with its main rival, China. They argue that "an invasion of Panama would set the whole of Latin America on fire". We agree with that.

However, a direct invasion of Panama is not strictly necessary to achieve Trump's aims. Let us look at the observable facts. Earlier this year the US exerted enormous pressure on Panama, including a visit by Marco Rubio. Through these means (big power bullying, economic threats, diplomatic pressure), the US forced Panama to break its commitment to China's Belt and Road initiative, and to allow the presence of US military troops on Panamanian soil. It also attempted to force the sale of two ports at each end of the Panama Canal from Hong Kong based port operator CK Hutchinson to a conglomerate dominated by US finance capital company Blackrock.

The US has already achieved most of its aims, without the need to go to war or physically invade the country.

This conflict reveals something else. China has now actually blocked the sale of the Panamanian ports from a Chinese company to a US based one and the sale has therefore not yet gone through.

There are three conclusions which can be drawn from this: a) the US wants to strengthen its domination of important trading routes and spheres of influence close to its borders; b) there is a conflict between the US and China over Panama; c) China is in a position to resist and fight back against the US. We are not sure how else these facts can be interpreted.

The comrades' analysis of the world situation is that there is a "disaggregation of the world market" leading to "chaos" and "barbarism". We do not disagree that this is the case, but that does not explain *what are the causes of this situation and how it expresses itself*.

We also warn that when they talk of "the interests of international financial capital which dominates the world economy" they come dangerously close to Kautsky's idea of "ultra-imperialism". That is the idea of a world which is dominated by *international* finance capital *above* the different imperialist powers, and in which the conflict between nation states is irrelevant.

Finance capital indeed dominates the world, but it is not one single entity above and beyond the nation states. US imperialism exists and has its interests. So does Chinese imperialism and its finance capital. There are also a number of other imperialist powers. The interests of finance capital in each imperialist country are defended by their respective nation states.

The conflict among them is aggravated by the crisis of capitalism, as they are competing for a share of a diminishing pie, as well as by the change in the relative strength



of the different imperialist countries, as Lenin explained.

UKRAINE WAR

The comrades object to our assertion that Russia has won the war in Ukraine, and that it has built a powerful army which is a match to Europe's forces. Likewise, they object to the idea that Russia's defence industry is outproducing the whole of the US and Europe in tanks, artillery pieces, shells, drones, etc. When provided with the facts they retort that this is "propaganda" aimed at justifying higher defence spending by the West.

Let's look at this briefly. Since the spectacular failure of the Ukrainian 2023 offensive, the war in Ukraine has become a war of attrition. The Russians have been advancing, slowly but surely, on all sectors of the front since the end of 2023, basing themselves on their superiority in military production and a steady supply of manpower which outnumbers Ukraine. The West has been unable to change this dynamic. Its own stockpiles of weapons and ammunition have reached dangerously low levels and can't keep up with military production in Russia. Russia has been supported by North Korea in terms of artillery and shell production while Iran has provided it with a number of different drones. But even here, Russia has expanded its own domestic production as a part of its powerful weapons industry to supply the war effort. All serious western military experts agree.

To give just one figure. Russia produces 3 million artillery shells a year, while the

combined production of Europe and the US is 1.2 million.

In terms of manpower, Russia has been able to replenish its losses without having to resort to mass mobilisation, while Ukraine faces a major crisis. According to official Ukrainian sources, hundreds of thousands of soldiers have gone absent without official leave. Meanwhile, recruitment officers roam the streets kidnapping men against their will, and they are facing growing resistance.

Meanwhile, the rate of the Russian advance is increasing. Given the above factors, it is only a matter of time before there is a major collapse in the frontline. We cannot say exactly when, but it is clear that for all intents and purposes the war is lost for Ukraine and the West, and is won for Russia. This is the reason why Putin is not in a hurry to reach a settlement. If he is able to achieve Russia's war aims at the negotiating table, he will be willing to do so. But if that is not possible, he can achieve them on the battlefield.

CHINA AS A RIVAL TO THE US (AND CHINA'S NAVY)

The comrades "do not think that China is in a position to rival the US either economically nor militarily".

We think that this statement flies in the face of reality. Over the last 30 years China has gone from a country which was used as a source of cheap labour for Western multinational companies, and exported mainly cheap products (textiles, toys); to a country that has developed its own industry,



and dominates a series of high-technology sectors of the world market (nuclear power stations, electric batteries, electric vehicles, solar panels, telecom infrastructure, etc.).

Again, if you look at the available evidence you will see that the US has taken extraordinary measures to try to prevent China from having access to the most advanced microchips and microchip making equipment. This is an area in which China is still behind the US. However, China is catching up and the US wants to prevent being overtaken. The dynamic is clear: one of fierce competition. The line of march is also clear: the technological gap between China and the West is closing.

Just by looking at the composition of bilateral trade between China and the US you can get a sense of the real position. China's main categories of exports to the US are "electrical machinery and electronics" (28%), and "machinery, mechanical equipment and parts" (19.5%). The main categories of US exports to China are "mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation" (16.8%), and "oils seeds, oleaginous fruits, grains, straw & fodder import origins" (10.8%).

An important aspect of this is the fact that in China the state plays an oversized role in the economy (as a result of the way in which capitalist restoration was carried out from above). Another is what Trotsky explained in his *History of the Russian Revolution* about combined and unequal development:

"A backward country assimilates the material and intellectual conquests

of the advanced countries. But this does not mean that it follows them slavishly, reproduces all the stages of their past....

Although compelled to follow after the advanced countries, a backward country does not take things in the same order. The privilege of historic backwardness – and such a privilege exists – permits, or rather compels, the adoption of whatever is ready in advance of any specified date, skipping a whole series of intermediate stages....

The fact that Germany and the United States have now economically outstripped England was made possible by the very backwardness of their capitalist development."

This is precisely what has happened in China.

As for the Chinese navy, which the comrades seem to consider a "paper tiger", the truth of the matter is that, also in this field, China is catching up. The Chinese navy has 400 ships to the US's 290, though the US has a significant superiority in high end platforms like nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers and destroyers. China's shipbuilding capacity in tonnage is 200 times that of the United States for commercial and military vessels (see for instance: *Murky Waters Navigating the Risks of China's Dual-Use Shipyards*, <https://features.csis.org/hidden-reach/china-shipyard-tiers/>). That would allow rapid fleet expansion and replacement of losses which according to bour-



geois experts and war planners could give China the edge in a prolonged conflict.

The draft World Perspectives document states that China “is in the process of developing a powerful and modern navy to defend its interests in the high seas”. Anyone who assesses the facts can see that this is correct.

Even in recent months, China has been projecting its naval power in the region, with constant drills around Taiwan, the circumnavigation of Australia and New Zealand, and military manoeuvres around Japan’s islands. All of this raised alarm bells in the US, and with good reason.

None of this means that there’s a new period of stability on the horizon, where the imperialist powers carve up the world by a gentleman’s agreement, and with that a new period of economic upswing. Precisely the opposite is the case.

THE CHARACTER OF TRUMP AND BONAPARTISM

We are glad that the comrades have amended their position on the character of the Trump phenomena in the US. They now say that the US regime is “a bourgeois democracy with profound bonapartist features which tend to accentuate”.

We do not think that bonapartism is a useful category to analyse Trump. Bonapartism is a political regime which arises when the conflict between the contending classes reaches a point of mutual exhaustion or is equally balanced. It is then that the state rises further above the classes acquiring a greater degree of independence,

usually under the rule of a strong man. The Bonaparte leans on one class to strike blows against the other and vice versa, ultimately defending the interests of the propertied class.

Many regimes have features which can be described as bonapartist. But having *bonapartist features* does not mean the regime *is bonapartist*.

In the case of Trump he is certainly using repression against undocumented migrants and against pro-Palestine activists. He is also on the war path; clashing openly against different sectors of the state apparatus, and attempting to expand the limits of presidential power.

But none of this makes Trump *qualitatively* different from other governments in the US, or other capitalist governments in Europe. None of this represents *the main feature* of his administration.

To give just two examples. Trump has forcibly deported undocumented migrants to El Salvador where they are jailed without any legal recourse. But previous US governments established the Guantanamo Bay detention camp in which citizens of other countries that were illegally kidnapped were held without charge, without trial, and tortured for decades. European governments have established migrant detention centres in Albania, Turkey and Libya.

Trump has detained foreign students for their involvement in Palestine solidarity and wants to deport them. France has arrested foreign nationals for their involvement in Palestine solidarity, keeping them



in detention without charge, and without informing their families for weeks. Berlin is moving to deport foreign citizens for their participation in Gaza solidarity activities, even though it is illegal as they are EU citizens.

Do we then describe *all* Western political regimes as bonapartist or having deepening bonapartist features? That would make the label lose any meaning.

Of course, we oppose all and any repressive measures, against migrant workers, as well as against the Palestine solidarity movement.

The *main feature* of the Trump phenomenon, which makes it different from other governments, is the fact that he is demagogically riding the wave of a widespread anti-establishment mood and a deep crisis of legitimacy of all bourgeois institutions, prepared by decades of attacks on living standards. He is appealing to the working class, promising to deliver a return to the “good old days” of high-paid industrial jobs and good living standards. That is the most important thing to understand about him and which determines the perspectives for his movement.

Far from this being a strong government ruling through the naked power of the sword, this is a government which is mainly based on the demagogic appeal to this anti-establishment mood we have described. In the context of the crisis of capitalism, Trump will be exposed as being unable to square the circle of delivering tax cuts for his billionaire friends and improving living standards for the working class.

At that point the anti-establishment mood which propelled him to power can swing violently to the other extreme.

We recommend comrades to read Ted Grant’s reply to Pierre Frank on the question of bonapartism for a deeper understanding of this question.

THE US AND THE USSR

The Brazilian IEC comrades’ contribution also objects to describing the USSR as a rival to the US in the period of the cold war “when its policy was that of peaceful coexistence”, “crushing revolutions everywhere in the world”. It argues that the bureaucracy “instead of being a rival to capitalism ... was a transmission belt of world imperialism within the degenerated workers’ state”.

Here the comrades are confusing two different things. The Stalinist bureaucracy played a counter-revolutionary role, incidentally, not from the time of Yalta and Postdam, but all the way back to the Spanish Revolution, when Trotsky said Stalinism had played a *conscious* counter-revolutionary role for the first time.

And yes, as the draft World Perspectives document says: “the Soviet bureaucracy was not interested in world revolution and was quite prepared to reach a *modus vivendi* with Washington, expressed in the policy of ‘peaceful coexistence’.” There is no difference here.

However, does that mean that the USSR and the US were not rivals for that whole period? Not at all.



The Soviet Union was a country where capitalism had been abolished and a nationalised planned economy had been created. On that basis, despite the bureaucracy, the USSR grew enormously and developed the economy, albeit at a greater cost than would have been the case under a healthy workers' state.

The bureaucracy played a counterrevolutionary role not only in relation to the world revolution, but also in relation to the Soviet economy. But for a whole period of time the bureaucracy was "compelled to defend state property as the source of its power and its income", as Trotsky explained in "*The Revolution Betrayed*".

In that sense, the USSR, despite the bureaucracy's opposition to revolution elsewhere, remained a point of reference for the masses in the colonial and former colonial countries, and to a lesser extent for workers in the West. There was a conflict between world capitalism and the countries where capitalism had been abolished. That is the meaning of the Korean War, the 1962 missile crisis in Cuba, the participation of the Soviet Union in the Vietnam War, etc.

It is difficult to imagine that capitalism would have been overthrown in Cuba, Angola, Ethiopia, Vietnam, etc. without the existence of the Soviet Union. Of course, as these regimes modelled themselves on the Stalinist USSR and not that of Lenin and Trotsky, what emerged there were deformed workers' states, with a bureaucracy at the top. Nevertheless, capitalism was abolished – *despite the Soviet bureaucracy*

but at the same time, at least in part, as a result of the existence of the USSR.

The conflict between two antagonistic and incompatible socio-economic systems was also the reason why the US forced the strengthening of capitalism in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. It did this to prevent the example of the USSR and China leading to the overthrow of capitalism in those countries.

The social conquests the working class gained in Western Europe in the postwar period were the result of several factors: the massive development of the productive forces, the strength of the working class, but also the existence of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc next door, where the planned economy had guaranteed housing, education, healthcare and rising living standards (in spite of the bureaucracy and only for a period of time).

A NOTE ON METHOD

Finally, we would like to make an observation on method. From the discussions we have had with the Brazilian comrades over the past few years (on whether there was development of the productive forces in the post-war period, and on whether Russia and China are imperialist) we can see there is a common thread.

The comrades take a statement by Lenin or Trotsky as an absolute truth beyond time and space. Then they attempt to fit the facts and reality into that statement or their understanding of it. This is precisely the opposite of the Marxist method of analysis, which is materialist and starts



from concrete reality, studies it in all its aspects, discovers its internal contradictions, its evolution in time, and then attempts to draw theoretical generalisations from it.

Thus, since Trotsky said in 1938 that “mankind’s productive forces stagnate”, then they take that as proof that the productive forces could not have grown in the post-war period. But of course the productive forces grew massively between 1948 and 1973. How do they get around this apparent contradiction? By saying that instead of the development of productive forces, what we saw was the development of “forces of destruction”, which they link to the question of the military industry.

The argument that the massive economic boom after the Second World War was based on the military industry was advanced by Tony Cliff in his ‘theory’ of the “permanent arms economy”, and was answered at the time by Ted Grant. As the draft World Perspectives document explains:

“It would be simplistic to say that capitalists are embarking on a new arms race in order to boost economic growth. In fact, *arms expenditure is inherently inflationary* and any effect on the economy will be short-term and offset by cuts in other sectors. In the long run, *it constitutes a drain on the productive economy by syphoning off surplus value.*”

If a Marxist perspective were proven to be in contradiction with the observed facts, surely, then the perspective would have to be revised, not the facts mangled beyond

recognition in order to fit the preconceived perspective!

We do not think that the fundamental ideas of Marxist theory need to be revised. Key Marxist texts such as Lenin’s *Imperialism*, Trotsky’s *Permanent Revolution* and many others, are relevant and extremely useful in order to understand the present world situation and the crisis of capitalism. But one needs to use them to understand the method of Marxism and apply them to the current situation, not take them as the Scriptures and use them in a scholastic manner, isolating quotes out of context.

Such a method, rather than sharpening our understanding of the objective situation, places a barrier, a fog of rigid and mechanical principles, in the place of dialectical thinking.

London,
June 12, 2025

A NEW WORLD SITUATION HAS OPENED UP: THE YALTA AND POTSDAM ORDER IS OVER

— ALTERNATIVE TO WORLD PERSPECTIVES SUBMITTED BY SIX BRAZILIAN DELEGATES

The following is a document submitted by six Brazilian delegates as an alternative to the IEC world perspectives document. The text is originally part of the political report approved by the Brazilian Central Committee for the upcoming Brazilian congress.

1. Comrades,
2. This is a reflection on the new world situation. It is not complete. It's an initial reflection, but we believe it has great importance. On the international situation, there is a lot to develop. Wars, the actions of capital in its different monstrous forms, but all of them with a single soul, with a knife in their mouth and eyes injected with blood, attacking the proletariat and threatening humanity. **But the central thing is to realise that the world has changed and nothing will ever be the same again.**
3. It will be in the chaos, with its class struggle, that the proletariat will be able to build a bevelled peace and a future for humanity. Comrades, draw your swords, because the monsters have taken off their sheepskins. The working class will fight. We are moving towards the era of new Spartacuses, new Leonids, new Communes and new Soviet revolutions.
4. The epoch of Lenin and Trotsky is still open in front of us. The discour-



aged, the whiners, the adapted, those who see no more in history than what the capitalists tell them, those who believe that bourgeois democracy is democracy, they cannot offer any future to youth, to the working class, to the human race.

5. But the revolutionaries who, with Marxism, manage to understand the history of the class struggle and take organised action in the class struggle are here for humanity!
6. We have a lot more work to do on the new world situation. This will be a collective task, in which all elected leaders, cadres and militants have an essential role to play. This is not a definitive text, but the framework of developments in the international situation analysed by the OCI Central Committee. Undoubtedly, we will be able to develop it collectively in order to organise our tasks for the coming tumultuous times, which will necessarily have different deadlines and rhythms in each country. But we have absolute confidence in our programme, in the working class and in the certainty that only Bolshevism can emerge from this torrent and open up a future for humanity.
7. We've made it clear that the most accurate characterisation is that **it's a new world situation** and not a 'turning point in the world situation', because this expression ('turning point') includes the idea that the working classes have taken a worldwide initiative, as they did, for example, in 1968, from Czechoslovakia to France, Brazil, Mexico, the United States and other countries, in other words, a global initiative by the masses against governments and regimes. Not that this isn't happening, but it's not yet a turning point in the world situation.
8. For example, in Germany, not only did the SPD suffer the biggest defeat in its history, the AfD won 20 per cent of the vote, and the CDU, the reactionary Christian Democrats, also won. So it's not yet a 'turning point' in the world situation. And even though there are strikes in a number of places, a huge number of combat strikes, and now the situation in Greece, with a million people on the streets, it's still not a turning point in the world situation from the point of view that our class has the initiative, putting the other class with the knife to its neck.
9. There are many historical examples of this. For example, the Russian Revolution was a turning point in the world situation, at a time when the world was coming out of the First World War, and the initiative of the Russian masses brought about a turning point in that world situation. The situation today is that there is a new world situation. It is no longer the world situation that we had been analysing, at least to talk about recent times, 2008, 2009, the deepening of the crisis, the new leap of the crisis during the pandemic, in other words,



the temperature of the water rising and already showing some bubbles.

10. The water has reached boiling temperature and is turning into vapour. We can't exactly say which way this vapour will go or how it will develop, whether it will return to a liquid state, disperse in the air or burn somewhere, but it is a new global situation. And we must explain this, because of its importance, in the run-up to the next National Congress of the OCI, because we have a huge number of new militants who don't properly know the ins and outs of the history and class struggle of the previous century and even of more recent history. So we should start – or keep saying – that this is exactly what it's about: the opening up of a new situation in the world and the importance of the issue.
11. In this new world situation, the fundamental feature is the deepening of crises and clashes between different sections of the bourgeoisie and within the working class. This picture of crises and class-against-class clashes is part of the general picture of the organic contradiction of the capitalist system in its final phase, imperialism: the inability of the bourgeoisie and its states to direct the productive forces they have created and the rebellion of these same productive forces against the despotism of capital in the form of ever deeper and more extensive crises. The domination of finance capital in our era, with a million threads across the planet, and its need for self-valorisation, imposes the deepening of clashes between sectors of the ruling class which, however, remain fundamentally united: the increase in the rate of profit, the absurd concentration of wealth on one side and growing misery on the other. This means destroying productive forces through localised wars and increasing the extraction of surplus value from existing markets. This leads to the violent imposition of tariffs, privatisations, the implementation of technologies and the subjugation of dominated countries through the payment of internal and external debts.
12. The working class is fighting all over the world. This is demonstrated in the heart of imperialism. The Trump administration arrests Mohamed Khalil, and demonstrations march to Trump Tower demanding his release; Trump announces tariff increases, the working class responds with 'Hands Off' demonstrations in April; Trump goes to war against Iran, 'Hands Off Iran' demonstrations; the Trump administration orders the arrest of immigrants, and a rebellion in Los Angeles against the police forces is established in defence of immigrants. The working class does not feel defeated and shows that it is willing to fight.
13. The development of the crisis of capital will deepen even further in this situation, leading to the disintegration of the world market and, therefore, to a greater crisis of the institutions that



the bourgeoisie itself created during its period of development and of the living conditions of the peoples. This will mean greater polarisation between the classes, wars and revolutions, but also **necessarily differentiation between the factions of the ruling classes and political and organisational redefinitions within the working class, which in order to fight finds itself increasingly obliged to confront the official leaders of the organisations that the class still recognises as its own.**

14. In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, we had what was called the Yalta (in Crimea) and Potsdam (in Germany) Order, two conferences organised by Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill that established what they called the 'World Order'.
15. The Yalta and Potsdam order meant the counter-revolutionary agreement between the Soviet Union, which, with the Red Army, had defeated Nazism and fascism, and US imperialism, which entered the war late, leaving Europe, in particular Britain and France, financially and economically drained for a long time. Then, when the Red Army turned the war around after Stalingrad and the Battle of Kursk – but basically Stalingrad – and marched towards Berlin, the United States entered the war by sending its troops directly, right in the middle of the conflict. After all, they couldn't let the Red Army defeat Nazism and occupy the whole of Europe.
16. In 1944, the Yalta and Potsdam Accords were a treasonous policy and action led by Stalin and his partner Roosevelt, with the aim of stifling the momentum of the revolution coming from Asia to Europe. Germany was divided in half and the zones of influence were decided – zones that had already been defined by the fighting. All of Eastern Europe was already occupied by the Red Army, and there was no bourgeoisie left in most of these countries, such as Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, because they had either fled Nazism or collaborated with it. In Slovakia and Hungary, they collaborated; in Poland, they fled to England. The result was that, at the end of the war, there was no bourgeoisie to take back ownership of the means of production.
17. For this reason, Dimitrov, at Stalin's behest, created the anti-Marxist and counter-revolutionary theory of the 'People's Democracies', which would be a transition in which there would be state-owned capital and private capital, and where the bourgeoisie would have a place and preponderance, in other words, a workers' state, even a bureaucratic one, would not be established. This failed because there was no bourgeoisie, and where its vestiges remained, the masses swept it away, and the Red Army was forced to expropriate everything.
18. The agreement on zones of influence had already been practically defined by the situation that developed dur-



ing the war. In 1944, the Bretton Woods Conference was held, where the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were created: one to lend money to countries in need, further subjecting them to the control of big business, and the other to regulate world economic relations. In this Bretton Woods agreement – whose inspirers, since 1942, had been John Maynard Keynes and Harry Dexter White of the United States – it was decided in 1944 that, since around 60 to 70 per cent of the world's gold was in the hands of the United States, or on its way to them (because France and England needed to pay for the armaments and spending that the US had kindly financed, as is now the case with Ukraine), in addition to war reparations from Germany, Japan and Italy, the Gold Standard for international exchange, which had already been abandoned since the First World War, was to be replaced by a new standard: the Dollar Standard. The US guaranteed that dollars could be freely converted into gold in the country itself. The gold was deposited in Fort Knox, in the United States, and the paper issued by the US government, the dollar, could be exchanged for gold. So theoretically – well theoretically, as we shall see – if someone had \$100, they could go to the US Treasury and exchange it for a corresponding amount of gold.

19. This had two consequences. One was that all the contradictions of capital-

ism after the Second World War hit the United States, which until then had been on the other side of the Atlantic, quite calm and growing at the expense of the Old Continent. But there was another problem: the United States established 754 military bases around the world and had to launch the Marshall Plan to rebuild the bourgeois states in Europe in order to contain the proletarian revolution and integrate the European economy under US control. In addition, they implemented the Colombo Plan to rebuild Japan and South-East Asia – which was the Pacific Marshall Plan – and so on. To do this, they needed more dollars than those issued with direct gold backing.

20. So the United States, as they were the only ones who controlled the gold (to this day, no person who doesn't work at Fort Knox can enter, except perhaps the President of the Republic; the last one who entered was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Now, Elon Musk wants in, Donald Trump wants in, and there's a stalemate over whether the gold is there).
21. What did the Americans do? They started issuing dollars without explanation. In 1970, the coup-plotting president of France, Charles de Gaulle, who held \$7bn – which at the time was a fortune – suspected that the US was running a scam and sent for France's \$7bn in gold.



22. And at that moment, Richard Nixon signed an act preventing the conversion and cancelling the exchange of the dollar for gold. The whole world, including de Gaulle, was left with nothing but a piece of paper whose value no one knew for sure, because no one knew the real amount of gold that served as collateral. The result was that everyone remained silent and continued to use the dollar as the gold standard, because if someone shouted ‘catch the thief’, everyone would run to the bank and discover that there wasn’t enough money. So the dollar remained the standard, sustained by a perfect coup, backed by guns.
23. This is the epoch of imperialism, the epoch of the general decline of capitalism, in which the productive forces are suffocated within the national state and private property and are transformed into destructive forces. This is the meaning of what Marx explained when he said that the epoch of revolutions and the change of social system was opening, and of Lenin’s definition of imperialism in the 20th century: the epoch of wars and revolutions.
24. In this situation, the gains made after the Second World War – with the Red Army defeating Nazism and the fear of communism spreading to Europe, Japan, Korea and Vietnam – forced imperialism to make concessions to try to stop the expropriation of the means of production from continuing. Obviously, they didn’t trust Stalin enough to say ‘this guy is with us’, despite his policy of co-operation, which translated into ‘peaceful co-existence’ with imperialism.
25. And there, the contradiction between the growth of constant capital and its equation with variable capital, which is where profit comes from – in other words, the expression of the theft of surplus value, which is transformed into profit in this way – develops more and more. Incidentally, this is why, on the day that machines control the entire planet and do everything, capitalism will come to an end, because there will be no one to buy what the machines produce. And if, by chance, the machines decide to produce everything to distribute, it won’t be called capitalism any more. So this is a utopian and catastrophic hypothesis – utopian or dystopian. The bourgeoisie itself would have to fight it cruelly.
26. But in 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the Yalta and Potsdam order broke down – half of it. The other half remained: the United States’ relationship with Europe, with Japan and with various countries that formed the bloc that, on 4 April 1949, would lead to the formation of NATO, as well as the 754 US military bases scattered around the world. Thus, imperialist control continued, even after the fall of the Soviet Union had already torn up half of the Yalta and Potsdam world order.



27. Now we are in a new stage: the situation of the rupture of the other part of the Yalta and Potsdam order and its liquidation. Marco Rubio's speech in the US Senate, which is complemented by J.D. Vance's speech at the European Security Conference in Munich, has two significant points. Vance says that European governments are losing elections and will lose more because they've all bought into this identity politics rubbish and haven't bothered with the hunger of the people, with the unemployed. Everything he said is true. Despite being a liar and an imperialist scoundrel, he blamed the bourgeoisie and the European bourgeois parties precisely. And along with that, he accused European governments and parties of attacking democracy by regulating and controlling US companies. They want to break down the doors of the European Union, which they themselves have been building since 1952, with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, and then with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. This became the European Union in 1993. Before that, there was still the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with its freezing of planted areas, production quotas for farmers, etc. This made it much easier to influence each individual country and negotiate as a bloc with the Europeans.
28. The second relevant issue was the declaration of war, which expresses Trump's position, in Secretary of State Marco Rubio's speech to the US Senate: 'The post-war world order is not only obsolete, but has become a weapon used against us,' since 'we accepted the Communist Party of China into the world order, where it took all the advantages and ignored all the obligations and responsibilities.' He recognised, however, that China has 'served us very well' and 'very much'. And Rubio concludes: **'we must turn to creating a free world out of chaos.'**
29. Obviously, these people don't understand the organic structure of how capital works and can't accept it if someone explains it to them. Even those who do understand this systemic functioning cannot accept it and fight against the tide, because it is their life as a class that is at stake. The bourgeoisie can never forgive Marx for bringing to light what was going on 'in the hidden abode of production': the private appropriation of surplus value by the bosses.
30. They realise that the old order no longer serves the interests of capital at the moment and that **it is out of chaos that they want to build a new order.**
31. The thing is, as we've already discussed, there's a major split in the world's imperialist bourgeoisie. And it's not because the Big Techs have joined forces with Trump that international finance capital, all the bour-



geoisies – including the North American, European, Asian, etc. – are with Trump. No. Finance capital, which is imperialism in the Leninist sense, cannot support a nationalist policy of protectionism and violent trade war, as it is now. Yes, because there is now a real trade war in the world, unleashed by Trump.

32. Before, it was raids and friction, which is normal in a public market between the guy selling fish and the guy buying fish. One says: ‘You’re ripping me off,’ and the other says: ‘The fish is more expensive, the rent has gone up, etc.’
33. But not now. Now there’s an all-out war. It’s the end of the Yalta and Potsdam order. That’s why the IMF is disappearing more and more; the World Bank, nobody talks about it any more; the WTO, which was created for the same purpose, only later, is like a dying woman who hasn’t yet been evicted from the building she occupies, but which is of no use to anyone else. In other words, **it’s the continuation of the march towards the break-up of the world market.** This march has been a long time coming, as we’ve already explained, but it’s reaching a situation of great disaster.
34. For example, there is already talk in various places of creating regional currencies etc. They won’t be able to do that. Lula is the champion of saying this nonsense: create a Mercosur currency, create a BRICS currency. But there’s no viability in that, because the market is global and interdependent. And what have they been doing for some time now? Trying to get out from under the dollar. And that’s why the United States is so furious at the idea of creating currencies for regional trade, because the dollar could plummet to 10 per cent of its value if that were to happen.
35. Added to all this is a small problem. This business that they’re already trying to do – buying and selling using, for example, Brazilian reals and Chinese renminbi – is, in a way, a form of **barter**, dating back to the beginning of capitalism, when someone would cut your hair and you’d give them a chicken. After all, the real and the renminbi are part of the international parity of the production and circulation process, which, like it or not, still has the dollar as its standard.
36. That’s what happened in 2001 in Argentina, when the whole economy collapsed. A shoe was exchanged for a dress or for food, but it turns out that anyone with the slightest bit of sense in their head knows that a shoe doesn’t have the same value as a dress. It can be worth much more or much less. And if there are no parameters for knowing how much labour power is invested in each commodity, you completely unbalance the market and break it up. It breaks up the market and the chains of production and circulation, because money has



this function of synthesising how much labour-value is included in it, so that the commodities can be compared. Otherwise, there's no way to compare. I can't give you a tonne of iron ore and you give me two tonnes of corn. Nobody knows how much it's worth if there isn't a standard, a capitalist and international trade standard, because the market is international. Therefore, with the economy internationalised and completely interdependent, the only sustainable way of functioning in the long term is to act on the basis of a standard – be it gold, the dollar or another universal standard. The rest is a gambit.

37. And the financial market, which is controlling the entire economy and speculation on the planet, cannot accept a situation like this, because if it develops, the financial market will end and, in the end, capitalism will regress to a kind of primitive and chaotic mercantilism. This is called barbarism.
38. The division of the bourgeoisie is real, and it is expressed to a certain extent in some places in the state apparatuses, which are the Business Committee of the bourgeoisie, but which have nothing to do with 'state interests', which is what 'geopolitics' claims – a theory developed against Marxism, against the world unity of the class struggle. What determines everything is the global unity of the class struggle, which derives from the existence of the world market.
39. So the international split of the bourgeoisie exists, and this will continue and intensify. Just like Kautsky's false theory that the development of imperialism would lead to a super-imperialism which, by controlling everything, would establish order and harmony in the world capitalist market.
40. Trump's policy should be understood as a policy of economic nationalism carried out by an imperialist country, the main imperialist country in the world, which is incompatible with the epoch of imperialism and with the very place the US occupies in the international division of labour. **As Trotsky has explained since Lenin, imperialism today means the domination of finance capital over the world market as a whole.** Inevitably, a policy of economic nationalism will clash with the very interests of US financial capital around the world, causing chaos and destruction. And let no one doubt that the working class in the US and around the world will be the hardest hit.
41. He's like a semi-moribund dragon, wriggling and 'smashing the whole playground', he's 'setting the playground on fire'. His '*America First*' is leading necessarily to trade war and threats or even wars everywhere. It is a time of accelerating decomposition of capitalist society, trapped in the bonds of the national state and private ownership of the means of production.



42. In this situation, Trump and the capitalist sectors he represents must promote chaos and attempt to discipline, contain and crush the working class within their own country first and foremost. This is the meaning behind the brutal attacks on immigrants, which are therefore attacks on the working class, the attacks on education, health and public services in general, which constitute an attack on the entire working class in the US and which will spread throughout the world.
43. Everyone who observes history knows that you can't wage war abroad with war at home. Hitler, like Mussolini, first had to destroy the workers' organisations in order to discipline and terrorise the working class, and then set about waging war outside. Today, Trump is at war at home and abroad.
44. He will inexorably be brought into confrontation with the US working class, which is not defeated, despite the brutal absence of the revolutionary subjective factor: an independent, mass revolutionary workers' party. We only have to remember the Boeing strike, the various strikes by metalworkers and dockers on the East Coast, nurses, teachers and the demonstrations in defence of Palestine, or the explosion following the assassination of George Floyd.
45. In this sense, Trump's entire drive is to deepen the Bonapartist features of the US regime ignoring even US laws, persecuting immigrants even with federal troops and Mariners, who are soldiers trained for war, attacking students, teachers, pro-Palestinian activists against the genocide promoted by Israel, attacking even the existing reactionary judicial system and solemnly despising the National Congress itself. After all, formally, **only the United States Congress has the power to declare war**, as established in Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution. The president, in turn, is the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces (Article II, Section 2), which allows him to order military action in emergency situations – but not to start a war unilaterally.
46. These Bonapartist traits appear in all bourgeois democracies around the world that can no longer coexist with the democratic freedoms wrested by the proletariat in the course of its struggles in the 19th and 20th centuries. They reveal the true skeleton of the bourgeois state, which is, in essence, a band of armed men with a prison system to defend capital. Bourgeois democracy, which calls itself liberal, lulls itself with so-called right-wing populism and repression against any dissent. This is a very important feature of the international situation, in which there is an accelerated decomposition of the capitalist system in all aspects: economic, political, cultural, artistic and social.
47. As we have stated, the Bonapartist features of the presidential regime are



deepening at this moment, seeking an appearance of hovering above the classes and increasingly attempting to become independent of the so-called democratic institutions. But this trajectory, which dates back to the founding of the American republic, has deepened with each passing decade. The so-called separation of powers is increasingly a farce. Since World War II, the United States has not made any formal declaration of war, and its various presidents, whether Democrat or Republican, have resorted to what they call 'broader legislative authorisations,' the most widely used being the so-called **AUMF (Authorisation for Use of Military Force)**, which allows the use of military force without a formal declaration of war in emergency situations. This is the case with the recent attack on Iran, where Trump cynically claims that there is an 'emergency' threat against the US, as if it were not alongside Israel in war against the Palestinians, against Lebanon etc.

48. Finally, the fact that the Trump administration is deepening the Bonapartist traits of the US bourgeois regime does not mean, in turn, that communists should align themselves with the counterrevolutionary politics of 'Defence of Democracy' or that any Democratic administration would be better than the Trump administration, or a 'lesser evil'. Communists do not line up behind bourgeois politicians or their parties, no

matter how "progressive" they may appear. A striking example of this was Bernie Sanders, whom the communists of the RCI refused to support, while not ignoring the masses who rallied around him.

49. The US democracy with its two parties, Democrats and Republicans, are just two wings of the imperialist bourgeoisie and represent no way out for the working class.
50. The fundamental task of the US working class is to build a class party, a workers' party independent of the bourgeoisie, which will serve as an instrument to overthrow the bourgeois regime and open the way for the future of humanity through a socialist revolution in the greatest imperialist power. On this path, communists must be the most determined and resolute wing in breaking with and fighting the bourgeoisie and its different variants, with the aim of building the international revolutionary communist party.
51. Marxists, communists, support neither the Zionist government of Israel nor the Islamic theocratic government of Iran. Communists are in favour of workers organising and overthrowing both their own governments.
52. We are in favour of the end of the Zionist state of Israel and for a democratic and secular state throughout the historical territory of Palestine, with equal rights for all nationalities, for all religions and for all those who



declare themselves non-religious, which we know can only be established by a socialist revolution that extends the struggle for a socialist federation of the countries of the Middle East. This is the position of Marxists.

53. We stand in solidarity with the people of Iran, their trade unions, workers' and democratic organisations, women's and youth organisations, all repressed by the Ayatollah regime, who know that Israel and the US offer no future for their people, but only the continuation of horror.
54. The enemy of humanity is imperialism and its agents and all defenders of the regime of private ownership of the means of production. That is why we utterly condemn the attacks by Israel, the bridgehead of US imperialism in the Middle East, as revealed by Israel's attack on Iran and the Trump administration's attack, expanding the war with allegations that are nothing more than propaganda weapons in their goal of spreading chaos and deepening their domination in the region. **And it became absolutely clear who is in charge when Trump publicly and shamefully disciplined Netanyahu, forcing him to turn back his fighter jets that were on their way to bomb Iran, demanding that he respect the ceasefire decided by the US. Netanyahu immediately fell into line with his master like a good servant, even if he has some interests that do not coincide with those of his boss.**
55. We are fighting against the US and Israeli war against Iran. It is high time for the Lula government to stop its cynical circus in which it publicly condemns Israel and withdraws its ambassador from Tel Aviv while maintaining all relations, especially economic ones, such as oil supplies to the genocidal regime, and diplomatic, academic and commercial relations with the Zionists and their state of apartheid and massacres.
56. Practical initiatives must be taken and presented in the activities of the workers' and youth movement and in all its organisations. We know that it will be in the workplaces, in the schools and in the neighbourhoods, in the streets that are our terrain, that we can amplify this movement.
57. The war started by Israel, fuelled and coordinated by the US, is yet another example that this Zionist state should not exist, that it only serves to oppress peoples at the behest of the United States and endangers the very Jews it claims to defend, encouraging and provoking anti-Semitism, another ultra-reactionary ideology in the world.
58. But at the end of the day, politics is resolved on the arena of class struggle and if Trump doesn't achieve his necessary internal goal, to paralyse and crush the American working class, he will be defeated in the international arena, not by force of arms, but politically, as it was in Vietnam or Afghanistan. The mass-



es are demonstrating that they are not defeated, that they are alive and fighting all over the world, and that they are reacting against the destruction and pain caused by the sinister wounded dragon.

59. Just as there is no socialism in one country, there is no capitalism in one country. Even if US imperialism wields the greatest power in the world, it has no way of disciplining the planet in this era of the ruin of capitalist society.
60. A good example is the interconnected speculation events. For example, when DeepSeek came out, Nvidia's value fell by 50 per cent on the New York Stock Exchange. It lost 50 per cent of its value in a week – a major crisis and all that, with many unwary people praising China – and two weeks later, Nvidia had already recovered 30 per cent of its value. This is an absolute demonstration of speculation and the significance of the stock markets. Because if it lost 50 per cent of its value, how can it recover 30 per cent in a fortnight? And Nvidia, faced with the emergence of DeepSeek, decided to make some adjustments to what it develops.
61. DeepSeek did what's called **refurbishing the open source code developed by Meta** – which means stealing technology, even if it's legalised by free software – and trained it in a lower level language, using Nvidia chips from three or four years ago, bought on the market.
62. And, of course, there were the Chinese, as there are in every country in the world – including Brazil – who have enormous creativity. Using chips and a structure that took Nvidia 30 years to develop and which therefore consumed billions of dollars, DeepSeek took everything that was ready, stole the technology, painted it blue, coloured it and put it on the market. Just like car thieves and parts receivers do at car dealerships.
63. But, 'There are more things between heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.' And at this point, it is already known that NVIDIA has a relationship with DeepSeek that is surprising, to say the least, and that it does not just supply hardware. Nvidia has **integrated the DeepSeek-R1 model** into its NIM microservices platform, presenting it as an example of a latest-generation reasoning model, and now offers optimised versions of DeepSeek-R1, etc.
64. So what we have is **a new world situation, with the end of the order established at the end of World War II by Roosevelt, Stalin and the buffoonish Churchill** (who was one of the most incapable military commanders in British history and who, in a single battle, led to a casualty of 220,000 soldiers, against the advice of the British generals), **who didn't see**



that he was just a thing of the past, along with his submerging empire.

65. The tariff war and the way Trump is conducting discussions with Russia and Ukraine show that they have no coherent way out. In other words, there is a new world situation. They want to move forward, but they don't have a coherent way to save their society. So their path is to extend domination, oppression and exploitation over the peoples and working classes – wars, misery and blood. Capitalism emerged oozing blood and filth from every pore, and this is how it will end.
66. One development of the war in Ukraine was the pressure on Germany to break agreements under which it received Russian gas and oil and replace it with gas and oil from the US. This led to a loss of competitiveness for German industry, which began to pay more for one of the inputs necessary for energy production. In addition, Russia had to lower the sale price of its oil and gas. And recently, a group of US investors is trying to secure a deal to buy the Nordstream 2 gas pipeline, which was deactivated due to the war. More than that, the US has signed an agreement with Ukraine that gives it almost total control over Ukraine's subsoil. The US agreements with Russia are not available yet, so nothing can be said about them. In addition, under the pretext of defending itself against Russia, Trump has secured an agreement with European countries to increase their military budgets to 5% – which will lead to more sales of American weapons to Europe.
67. The US invasion of Panama would provoke a greater anti-imperialist wave in Latin America than at other times, including when the US invaded Nicaragua in 1912 and 1933, and then laid siege to Cuba. At the time, the news arrived by telegram and newspaper. Now, on the same day, there will be dead Panamanians, dead Americans, burning embassies, etc. What's more, Trump's claim that China has built a port at each end of the canal doesn't hold water, since the two ports are being bought by a Yankee company in New York.
68. But why are we drawing attention to this new world situation? Because it will lead to a sharpening of the class struggle and even greater confusion in the ruling classes, as well as in the organisations that claim to be working class, but which are adapted to the capitalist game, to its bastardised and false democracy, and to the money that pours out of the state to better control them. And that will be a breach for the working class to enter.
69. Justin Trudeau's speech showed the impact of all this. He's the Prime Minister of Canada, but he resigned some time ago and has said he won't return to politics. He gave a speech addressing the workers of the United States and then the workers of Canada, and finally he made an ironic ref-



erence to Trump as ‘Donald’, because there’s Donald Trump and Donald Duck. He said, ‘Donald, you’re a smart guy, but your attitude is stupid,’ as the *Wall Street Journal* put it.

70. So we put this international situation in place so that the OCI realises that we’re in a **new international situation – an earthquake that nobody knows exactly where and how it’s going to stop, if at all.**
71. We don’t have the whole plan outlined as to what to do in this new situation, but we have to realise that the world has changed, the Yalta and Potsdam order is definitively over, Europe is panicking, the United States is biting and blowing, biting and blowing, but it’s biting and blowing in an extremely violent way. It’s not exactly that it’s backing down, as in Richard Nixon’s ‘madman theory’, which we’ve already talked about – a theory that says ‘go and say I’m mad, I’m going to drop an atomic bomb etc., then see what you can achieve and then we’ll back down’.
72. No. They’re in a situation where the biting and blowing is about biting off more and more. That’s why there’s more and more militarism, arms production, provoking localised or regional wars (Middle East!). And Europe is talking about 5% military spending. It’s the war of capital against the working class and the oppressed and exploited peoples. One of the most important newspapers of French imperialism has the headline: ‘*Pensions or Munitions?*’, and continues: ‘Mixing the debate on pensions with the financing of the military effort is a bad method. Working harder is the best way to finance the effort needed by armies.’ (*Les Echos*, 10/03/2025)
73. And in a situation where the United States is starting to go into recession, including because of Trump’s tariffs – and worse for them and for international capital – Japan is coming out of deflation and into inflation, something the country hasn’t seen for decades. While Japan suffered from deflation, workers also suffered even more, because the main commodity in the world is labour power, and its price is set by the general market average, with occasional differences here and there, depending on the class struggle.
74. So it’s a new world situation, and we have to prepare for it, reflect on it and act in line with it – a **New World Situation**. We could repeat a lot here about the wars that exist and that continue, especially in Ukraine and Palestine. But it’s not a question of repeating what we’ve already written. What we need to do now is deeply understand that there is a New World Situation and that *everything solid is falling apart in the air*, as the giants Marx and Engels taught us.
75. It is the definitive end of the Yalta and Potsdam order. This must be



the centre of comrades' reflection and elaboration because, without a doubt, we are entering a time of sharp and accelerating whirlwinds, wars and revolutions. Nothing will ever be the same.

76. Localised wars will continue to develop. The arms industry is booming – it has never made so much money – and those who think that wars cost too much, that they are carried out by sick or delusional individuals or those with a mania for grandeur, and that they end up costing so much that the country wants to stop the war so as not to spend any more, are living in the 18th and early 19th centuries, when kings went into debt to buy armies of mercenaries etc. We live in the era of imperialism, of militarism – and we advise comrades and our readers to read about militarism in Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky.
77. And all of this emphasises the need for the daily struggle to build the necessary subjective factor: the revolutionary, communist factor. Because the 'class itself' fights, but it can only win and sweep away the sad regime of private ownership of the means of production if it constitutes itself as a 'class for itself', nationally and internationally.
78. Get to work, comrades!

Approved on 22 March 2025
and updated on 28 June 2025

Submitted for discussion at the
World Congress by Serge Goulart,
Luiz Bicalho, Alex Minoru,
Maritania Camargo, Evandro
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International Section of the
Report of the Central Committee,
in preparation for the
9th Congress of the OCI

WORLD PERSPECTIVES AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT 1

Amend paragraph 10 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

Similarly, in the case of Ukraine, he was responsible for deliberately provoking a conflict that has led to a bloody slaughter, handing over billions of dollars in cash and military aid to the reactionary regime in Kyiv, and engaging in a dangerous policy of provocation against Russia that brought the USA to the brink of World War Three.

► **IS recommendation: Accept**

AMENDMENT 2

Amend paragraph 16 (Spanish National Conference):

The root cause of this anti-establishment anger can be found in the crisis of capitalism. It has reached massive

proportions since the crisis of 2008, from which the system has not yet fully recovered. **We are not going through just another cyclical crisis of capitalism, but an organic crisis of capitalism.** Support for bourgeois democracy in the advanced capitalist countries was built for decades on the idea that capitalism was able to satisfy some of the basic needs of the working class (healthcare, education, pensions...) and the expectation that each generation's living standards would improve, however slightly, in comparison with those of the previous generation.

► **IS recommendation: Accept**

AMENDMENT 3

Amend paragraph 32 (Mexican General Assembly):

No major steps were taken to limit the right to strike and demonstrate, still less to abolish free trade unions.



This is not to dismiss violent intervention in protests like BLM or No Kings, however, such violence is still more akin to that of a bourgeois government than the military extermination characteristic of a fascist regime. Elections were held as usual, and finally, although amidst a general uproar **mutiny**, Trump was succeeded by Joe Biden in an election. Say what you like about the first Trump government, but it bore no relation whatsoever to any kind of fascism **in terms of its characteristic of imposing a bureaucracy.**

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 4

Delete and replace paragraphs 35-38 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

35. Others have raised the idea that Trump represents a Bonapartist regime. The idea here, again, is to portray Trump as a dictator set on a path to crush the working class. But this form of labelling does not explain anything. In reality, far from attempting to crush the working class, Trump is appealing to it demagogically and trying to appease it. Of course, being a bourgeois politician he represents interests that are fundamentally opposed to those of the workers. But that does not make him a dictator.

36. It is possible to point to this or that element in the present situation that can be said to be an element of Bonapartism. That may be so. But similar comments could be made of almost any recent bourgeois democratic regime.

37. Merely to contain certain elements of a phenomenon does not yet signify the actual emergence of that phenomenon as such. One could, of course, say there are elements of Bonapartism present in Trumpism. But that is not at all the same as saying a Bonapartist regime actually exists in the United States.

38. The problem is that ‘Bonapartism’ is a very elastic term. It covers a wide gamut of things, starting with the classical concept of Bonapartism; which is basically rule by the sword. It is not useful to analyse the present Trump government in Washington in this fashion, which, despite its many peculiarities, still remains a bourgeois democracy. Our task is not to assign labels to things, but to follow the process as it unfolds and understand its essential aspects.

Trump has been deepening the Bonapartist character features of the US presidential regime by ignoring even American laws, persecuting immigrants even with federal troops and marines, attacking students, teachers, and pro-Palestinian activists against the genocide promoted by Israel, attacking even



the existing reactionary judicial system, and solemnly disregarding the American National Congress itself.

The deepening of Bonapartist traits is a hallmark of the current stage of capitalist development, which is increasingly unable to coexist with the democratic freedoms won by the proletariat in its struggles of the 19th and 20th centuries. The true essence of the bourgeois state is increasingly revealed to broad sectors of the working class: it is a gang of armed men with a prison system to defend capitalist property.

In the United States, the Bonapartist features of the presidential regime are deepening, seeking to grant the president a balance above social classes and increasingly seeking independence from so-called democratic institutions. However, this pattern, present since the founding of the American Republic, has deepened with each passing decade. The so-called “separation of powers” becomes increasingly inadequate for the interests of capital.

► IS recommendation: Reject

AMENDMENT 5

Amend paragraphs 41 and 42 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

At the end of the Second World War, the US emerged enormously strengthened. With Europe and Japan ruined by the war, America accounted for 50 percent of world GDP and for 60 percent of world manufacturing output. Its only serious rival on the world arena was the Soviet Union, which had emerged strengthened from the war, having defeated Nazi Germany and advanced across the continent.

The Chinese revolution further strengthened the Stalinist bloc. The US worked to rebuild Western Europe and Japan in an effort to contain the ‘advance of Communism’. The Soviet bureaucracy was not interested in world revolution and was quite prepared to reach a modus vivendi with Washington, expressed in the policy of ‘peaceful coexistence’.

► IS recommendation: Reject

AMENDMENT 6

Amend paragraph 50 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

The world situation is dominated by enormous instability in world relations. This is the result of the struggle for world hegemony **of the crisis of capitalism that leads to the deepening of conflicts and confrontations between the different bourgeoisies, such as** between the US, the world’s



most powerful imperialist power, which is in relative decline, and China, a younger, more dynamic rising imperialist power. We are witnessing a tremendous shift, comparable in scale to the movement of the tectonic plates on the Earth's crust. Such movements are accompanied by explosions of all sorts. The war in Ukraine – where a humiliating defeat for US-NATO is being prepared – and the conflict in the Middle East, are expressions of this fact.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 7

Delete paragraph 55 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

~~Trump's foreign policy is based on the recognition of the limitations of US power. The consequence of that is an attempt to disentangle America from a series of costly conflicts (Ukraine, Middle East) through deals, in order to rebuild its power and to concentrate on its main rival on the world arena, China.~~

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 8

Amend paragraph 69 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress dele-

gate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

1. While Russia is not an economic colossus comparable with China, it has established a solid economic and technological base. This has enabled it to successfully withstand the unprecedented economic aggression the West has inflicted on it under the banner of 'sanctions'. Moreover, it has done this while carrying on a war that has defeated all the weapons systems hurled against it by western imperialism. It has built a powerful army that is a match for the combined forces of the European states; it has built a formidable defence industry that is outproducing both the United States and Europe in tanks, artillery, ammunition, missiles and drones, and it possesses the world's largest nuclear arsenal, which it inherited from the USSR

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 9

Amend paragraph 75 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was the logical conclusion of the West's refusal to accept Russia's national security concerns, expressed in the demand of neutrality for Ukraine and a halt to the eastward expansion of NATO. ~~When Donald Trump asserts~~



that this war was unnecessary, and that if he had been president it would have never taken place, this is probably true. US imperialism and its European allies were well aware that NATO membership of Ukraine was a red line from the point of view of the national security interests of Russia. Despite this, they decided to invite the Ukrainians to apply for NATO membership in 2008. This was a blatant provocation, which logically would lead to the most serious consequences. It was this fatal step that eventually led to war.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 10

Amend paragraphs 77-79 and renumber (Austrian Expanded Central Committee):

Biden thought he could use Ukraine as cannon fodder in a campaign to weaken Russia and cripple its role in the world. A country like Russia, a rival to US imperialism, could not be allowed to threaten US global hegemony. **But US interference in Ukraine has another target, although less apparent, namely Germany and the EU. Breaking the link between the EU and Russia means weakening the base of German capitalism. That explains why in the beginning especially Germany was much less eager for war but, being too weak for a “third position”, inevitably**

had to follow US imperialism into it once it broke out.

In March 2022, Biden, puffed up by his own arrogance, even raised the idea of regime change in Moscow! Together with the Europeans, he was convinced that economic sanctions and military exhaustion would bring Russia to the point of collapse. They seriously underestimated the extent of Russia's economic and military power. As a result, US imperialism has found itself embroiled in an unwinnable war, which has represented a colossal drain on its financial and military resources.

Trump now insists that this disaster was not his doing. He says: “This is not my war. It is Joe Biden's war.” And that is correct. The strategists of capital are quite capable of making mistakes based on miscalculations. And this is a case in point. When Trump says that the war in Ukraine does not represent America's “core interests,” he is absolutely correct. America faces a far greater threat in Asia and the Pacific in the rising power of China, in addition to other problems in the Middle East and a growing economic crisis. That explains his haste in trying to extricate US imperialism from the treacherous swamp of Ukraine. But the problems created by Biden and his European stooges are proving difficult to resolve.

The men and women who run the show in Washington and London;



Paris and Berlin systematically sabotaged every attempt to bring about a peaceful solution **already before the war started**. In April 2022, negotiations in Turkey between Ukraine and Russia were quite advanced and could have led to an end of the war, on the basis of accepting a number of Russian demands. ~~Western imperialism~~; **US imperialism, supported by its British lapdog** in the person of Boris Johnson, scuppered the talks, pressuring Zelensky not to sign on the promise of unlimited support which would lead to Ukraine's full victory. **Today it is the Europeans, led by Germany, France and again the UK, who are putting pressure on Trump to continue the support of Ukraine and are themselves fanning the flames of war. The calculation for them is as simple as it is cynical: with the blood of tens of thousands of Ukrainian and Russian lives they want to buy time – first and foremost for their own rearmament to kick in.**

- ▶ **IS recommendation: Reject in favour of amendment 11**

AMENDMENT 11

Amend paragraphs 77-79 and renumber (IS):

Biden thought he could use Ukraine as cannon fodder in a campaign to weaken Russia and cripple its role in the world. A country like Russia, a ri-

val to US imperialism, could not be allowed to threaten US global hegemony. **But US interference in Ukraine has another target, although less apparent, namely Germany and the EU. Breaking the link between the EU and Russia means weakening the base of German capitalism. That explains why in the beginning especially Germany was much less eager for war but, being too weak for a “third position”, inevitably had to follow US imperialism into it once it broke out.**

In March 2022, Biden, puffed up by his own arrogance, even raised the idea of regime change in Moscow! Together with the Europeans, he was convinced that economic sanctions and military exhaustion would bring Russia to the point of collapse. They seriously underestimated the extent of Russia's economic and military power. As a result, US imperialism has found itself embroiled in an unwinnable war, which has represented a colossal drain on its financial and military resources.

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Pacific in the rising power of China, in addition to other problems in the Middle East and a growing economic crisis. That explains his haste in trying to extricate US imperialism from the treacherous swamp of Ukraine. But the problems created by Biden and his European stooges are proving difficult to resolve.

The men and women who run the show in Washington and London; Paris and Berlin systematically sabotaged every attempt to bring about a peaceful solution **already before the war started**. In April 2022, negotiations in Turkey between Ukraine and Russia were quite advanced and could have led to an end of the war, on the basis of accepting a number of Russian demands. **Western imperialism, US imperialism, supported by its British lapdog** in the person of Boris Johnson, scuppered the talks, pressuring Zelensky not to sign on the promise of unlimited support which would lead to Ukraine's full victory. **Today it is the Europeans, led by Germany, France and again the UK, who are putting pressure on Trump to continue the support of Ukraine and are themselves fanning the flames of war. Their calculations are quite cynical: they want to tie down the US and prevent a military withdrawal from Europe. At the same time, with the blood of tens of thousands of Ukrainian and Russian lives they want to**

buy time – for their own rearmament to kick in.

► **IS recommendation: Accept**

AMENDMENT 12

Add after paragraph 79 and renumber (British Central Committee):

At the beginning of the war, the Biden administration believed that it was capable of turning Russia into a pariah on the world stage and Putin into a persona non grata. The war has instead deepened the existing tensions in world relations, and in turn exposed the lie of an all-powerful ‘international community’ rallied behind US imperialism.

Beyond the EU, Japan, Britain, and Canada, the US has struggled to cajole the vast majority of the world's ruling classes behind its proxy war with Russia. This has been a striking confirmation that the US is unable to exert its political influence as it did thirty years ago. As Larry Summers, former treasury secretary of the US, warned of the further isolation of the west: “There’s a growing acceptance of fragmentation, and – maybe even more troubling – I think there’s a growing sense that ours may not be the best fragment to be associated with.”

► **IS recommendation: Accept**



AMENDMENT 13

Amend paragraph 80 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

Today, the US faces a humiliating defeat **an impasse** in Ukraine. Sanctions have not had the desired effect. Rather than suffering economic collapse, Russia has enjoyed steady economic growth rates far exceeding those of the West. Far from becoming isolated, it has now established closer economic ties with China and a number of key countries which are meant to be in the US sphere of influence. Countries like India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and others, have helped it to circumvent sanctions.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 14

Amend paragraph 92 (Spanish National Conference):

In terms of the export of capital, China is second only to the US. In 2023, the US accounted for 32.8 percent of global Foreign Direct Investment outflows, with China and Hong Kong representing a combined 20.1 percent. In terms of accumulated FDI stock, the US had 15.1 percent of the global total, while China and Hong Kong accounted for 11.3

percent. **Despite American dominance in this area, the long-term strategic plan for these capital exports has enabled China, over the last two decades, to carry out a significant process of control over maritime trade routes and the production and refining of minerals that are critical to the vast majority of modern technologies. China dominates global rare earth extraction (69%) and refining (92%). It also dominates the refining of critical minerals such as cobalt (80%), nickel (68%) and lithium (60%). In addition, China is advancing in its control of the extraction of major reserves, such as in the Congo (where it controls 15 of the country's 19 best cobalt mines) and Argentina (43% of its lithium exports went to China, compared to 11% to the US). This has been essential not only to dominate the production of the important technological sectors mentioned above, but also to establish certain controls on the export of these minerals to the US, which is an important bargaining chip in the negotiations with Trump on tariffs.**

► **IS recommendation: Accept**

AMENDMENT 15

Add after paragraph 107 and renumber (British Central Committee):



These are stimulus packages, not economic planning, and so alongside the issuance of mountains of debt, they amount to a series of market subsidies, incentives and regulations from the state. The implementation of these policies has led to colossal overproduction and misallocation of capital, as investors pile into favoured industries like EVs. According to the Economist (5.6.25), “By the end of last year’s third quarter, nearly 25% of China’s listed firms were in the red, more than double the proportion five years ago.” It is thought that only about three out of 112 EV manufacturers are making a profit (FT, 27.5.25).

► IS recommendation: Reject

AMENDMENT 16

Amend paragraph 112 (Mexican General Assembly):

It is, in fact, an economy that still maintains very considerable elements of state control, intervention and planning. This works very much in its favour, when compared to countries like the United States. **However, it is essential to emphasize that this state control in no way implies the existence of elements of transition to socialism. These mechanisms are at the service of national capital and its imperialist expansion, and have no relation to a socialist planned**

economy or to workers’ power. The claim of a supposedly progressive nature of this state control – as some Stalinist or Maoist sectors maintain – is completely alien to the revolutionary perspective.

► IS recommendation: Reject

AMENDMENT 17

Amend paragraph 139 (Italian National Council):

While the US has suffered a relative decline in its strength and influence globally, the old European imperialist powers – Britain, France, Germany and the others – have declined much further since their former days of glory, to second-rate world powers. It is worth noting that Europe, as an imperialist bloc, **the imperialist role of European countries** has been particularly weakened in the last decade. A series of military coups, for instance, have displaced France from Central Africa and the Sahel, largely to the benefit of Russia.

► IS recommendation: Accept

AMENDMENT 18

Amend paragraphs 154 and 155 and renumber (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):



The current conflict in the Middle East can only be understood against the background of the world situation. US imperialism had been weakened in the Middle East, while Russia, China and also Iran had become strengthened. Israel felt threatened. The 7 October attack ~~was a serious blow to the Israeli ruling class. It destroyed the myth of invincibility and questioned the ability of the Zionist state to protect its Jewish citizens, the key question which the Israeli ruling class had used to gather the population behind it.~~

It also clearly exposed the collapse of the Oslo Accords, signed in the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism. The whole thing was a cynical fraud from start to finish. The Zionist ruling class never really entertained any idea of conceding the Palestinians a viable homeland. They regarded the Palestinian National Authority (PA) as simply a way of outsourcing the policing of the Palestinians. This discredited Fatah and the PA – seen quite correctly as mere puppets of Israel – has led, with the acquiescence of Israel, to the rise of Hamas, which was seen by many as the only force pursuing the struggle for Palestinian national rights.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 19

Amend paragraph 158 and renumber (British Central Committee):

The attack was initially met with jubilation by the Palestinians, but it had the most terrible consequences. It handed Netanyahu, who immediately prior had faced a long wave of mass protests, a perfect excuse to launch a genocidal campaign against Gaza. **Netanyahu, Ben Gvir, Smotrich and co. saw in the October 7 attack a golden opportunity. Under the auspices of Israeli ‘security’ and ‘safety’, they have aimed to ethnically cleanse as many Palestinians as they can from their land. They have also sought to reassert their imperialist domination of the region through opening up the war on multiple fronts.**

One year later, the Israelis had reduced Gaza to a pile of smoking rubble, but they had not achieved their stated aims: the release of the hostages and the destruction of Hamas. **These two war aims were in direct contradiction with one another. The former requires a negotiated settlement with Hamas, whilst the latter precludes such negotiations from taking place. There was widespread anger that the Israeli government was solely concerned by destroying its enemy.** This led to mass demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of



Israelis and even a brief general strike in September 2024.

- **IS recommendation: Reject in favour of amendment 20**
-

AMENDMENT 20

Amend paragraph 158 and renumber (IS):

The attack was initially met with jubilation by the Palestinians, but it had the most terrible consequences. It handed Netanyahu, who immediately prior had faced a long wave of mass protests, a perfect excuse to launch a genocidal campaign against Gaza. **Netanyahu, Ben Gvir, Smotrich and co. saw in the October 7 attack a golden opportunity. Under the auspices of Israeli ‘security’ and ‘safety’, they have aimed to ethnically cleanse as many Palestinians as they can from their land. They have also sought to reassert their imperialist role in the region through opening up the war on multiple fronts.**

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anger that the Israeli government was *solely* concerned by destroying its enemy. This led to mass demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of Israelis and even a brief general strike in September 2024.

- **IS recommendation: Accept**
-

AMENDMENT 21

Add after paragraph 161 and renumber (Spanish National Conference):

Although Netanyahu’s main motivation for extending the conflict to Iran was his political salvation due to his problems at home, it seems clear that the limited 12-day war between Israel and Iran last June did have broader support among the Israeli ruling class. The strengthening of the Iranian regime in the region over the previous 20 years was seen by the Zionist bourgeoisie as a threat to Israel. But Iran had been left in a more fragile position in the area with the elimination of the Syrian Al-Assad regime and with Hezbollah and Hamas seriously weakened. Thus, a mini-war that could destroy Iran’s nuclear programme, or even bring about the overthrow of the regime, was a cause worth supporting. In the end, Israel failed to achieve this, and the repetition of a new military



confrontation between the two is only a matter of time.

► **IS recommendation: Accept**

AMENDMENT 22

Amend paragraph 167 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

The only true friends of the Palestinians are to be found in the Arab street – the oppressed masses of workers, peasants, small traders and the urban and rural poor. But their immediate task is to settle accounts with their own reactionary rulers. This poses the question of the abolition of capitalism through the expropriation of the landlords, bankers and capitalists. Without this, the revolution in North Africa and the Middle East can never succeed.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 23

Amend paragraph 167 (Mexican General Assembly):

The only true friends of the Palestinians are to be found in the Arab street – the oppressed masses of workers, peasants, small traders and the urban and rural poor. But their immediate task is to settle accounts with their own reactionary rulers. **The same**

responsibility falls on the Israeli proletariat, which will not throw off its chains until it takes responsibility for the destruction of the **Zionist state**. This poses the question of the abolition of capitalism through the expropriation of the landlords, bankers and capitalists. Without **this the unity of the proletariat beyond national and religious divisions**, the revolution in North Africa and the Middle East can never succeed.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 24

Amend paragraph 194 (Italian National Council):

Russia has a lot of clout (militarily and in terms of energy resources) and is already exercising a powerful pull on Europe's political scene. Countries like Hungary and Slovakia have already broken ranks with the Atlanticist orientation of the dominant European powers. In others, there are rising **some** political forces moving in a similar direction to one degree or another (Germany, Austria, Romania, Czech Republic, Italy).

► **IS recommendation: Accept**

AMENDMENT 25

Amend paragraph 233 (Mexican General Assembly):



Faced with factory closures, we should advance the slogan of occupation. Instead of yet more state bail-outs of private companies, we demand the opening of the books, **expropriation** and nationalisation under workers' control.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 26

Add after paragraph 238 and renumber (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

The development of the crisis of capital will deepen further in this situation towards the disintegration of the world market, which will mean greater polarization between classes, wars and revolutions, but also necessarily political differentiations within all social classes, which will lead to increasingly acute conflicts at the top of society and at the same time to reorganizations within the working class, which, in order to struggle, will increasingly be forced to confront opportunist politics and the official leaders of the organizations that the class still recognizes as its own.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 27

Amend paragraph 239 (Spanish National Conference):

Rather than the normal mechanism of bourgeois democracy, which serves to soften the class contradictions, the idea of direct action to achieve one's aims is becoming increasingly accepted. An article in *Le Monde* warned Macron in France that by preventing the party with most elected parliamentarians from forming a government, he risked the people drawing the conclusion that elections were of no use. In the US, one in four believe that political violence may be justified to "save" the country, up from 15 percent a year earlier. **In this regard, it is important to highlight the increase in terrorist tendencies in the United States. In the space of a few months, we saw the murder of the CEO of United Healthcare by Luigi Mangione, as a way of denouncing the abuse of large private healthcare companies, the murder of two employees of the Israeli embassy in Washington by a pro-Palestinian activist, and the murder of a Democratic congresswoman and her husband in Minnesota, as well as another attack on the same day against a Democratic senator, also in Minnesota. The latter were committed by right-wing fanatics. This recurring phenomenon of political terrorism in the US express-**



es the deep unrest and enormous contradictions that are shaking American society.

► IS recommendation: Accept

AMENDMENT 28

Add after paragraph 242 and renumber (Austrian Expanded Central Committee):

The ruling class can reliably lean on the reformists in the labour movement. The trade-union leaders prop up the competitiveness of their local capitalists, for example by accepting a decrease in real wages during the past crisis of inflation. The reformists uphold the classical policy of class-collaboration and rally behind their own ruling class. Externally they support wars and rearmament, internally they reinforce the state apparatuses and anti-democratic measures. The task of the reformists is to divert the anger of the working class and youth into safe channels and to keep them in passivity whenever possible. The economic and political struggles of the labour movement and the youth are thereby being hindered, isolated and disorganised from the start. The political programme of the reformists can today be summed up with the slogan: “for the lesser evil!”. The crisis of capitalism is too deep for them to even remotely be able to put forward an independent programme. They use the tradi-

tional working-class organisations and their historically established roots in the working class and the state apparatus to strengthen the position of one wing of the ruling class (usually the liberal wing). This assessment applies to the Social Democratic parties as well as to the wide range of socially relevant parties and alliances that come from the Stalinist tradition.

► IS recommendation: Reject

AMENDMENT 29

Add after paragraph 247 and renumber (Spanish National Conference):

The political programme of right-wing demagogues in Europe and Latin America, if they have one at all, exudes a petty-bourgeois character: national isolationism and exclusivism, the appeal to individualism, their disinterest in class oppression, a tendency towards mystical and irrational ideas, etc., which can only find an echo in an atmosphere of frustration and relative demobilisation of the working class. The petty bourgeoisie never has an independent class position; it either follows the proletariat or follows the big bourgeoisie. Thus, in foreign policy, these reactionary petty-bourgeois demagogues, when they have had to express themselves, have done so by siding with one imperialism or another: Meloni, Abas-



cal, Farage, Milei and Bolsonaro presenting themselves as spokesmen for US imperialism, and Alternative for Germany, and even Le Pen, leaning towards Russian imperialism. There are also those who lick the boots of Trump and Putin at the same time, as in the case of Orbán in Hungary. **When the fresh wind of class struggle blows again with full force, all these movements will enter into crisis.**

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 30

Amend paragraph 258 (Yugoslav Executive Committee):

In Serbia, the protest movement over the collapse of Novi Sad station canopy has created a revolutionary crisis, with the largest protest demonstration in the country's history. The students have played a decisive role, occupying the universities, and organising through student plenums (assemblies). ~~The protests have already brought down the government. The students—and are consciously trying to spread the movement to the working class and the people at large with the formation of *zborovi*, mass assemblies in towns and cities as well as in some workplaces. The movement has lasted over 9 months, with all attempts by the Vucic regime to stop the movement~~

~~backfiring and giving it additional fuel to continue.~~

► **IS recommendation: Accept**

AMENDMENT 31

Amend paragraph 261 (Caio Dezorzi [IEC member and elected World Congress delegate for Brazil] and Johannes Halter [elected World Congress delegate for Brazil]):

The climate crisis has also become a radicalising factor for this generation of young people who feel very strongly, and quite rightly, that unless things change radically, **life on Earth is threatened the destruction of the environment can bring increasingly serious problems to the development of life as we know it** and that the system is to blame.

► **IS recommendation: Reject**

AMENDMENT 32

Add after paragraph 262 and renumber (Austrian Expanded Central Committee):

There is no vacuum of ideas in any of these movements. Ideas that are alien to the working class, and organisations that promote them, dominate the political direction: petty bourgeois, feminist, identity politics and reformist ideas mixed up with various remnants of the failed notion of “socialism in one country”. In the Serbian mass



movement, even liberal ideas that seek to limit the movement to reforms of the state are competing against the idea that the bodies of the masses should establish a new statehood. Given the objective significance of the Palestinian question in the politicisation of youth, it is crucial to criticise the dominant ideas within this movement, which are completely unsuitable for achieving the liberation of Palestine. With the communist turn, the RCI is also entering into open competition with the forces of historical Stalinism, mostly its left-wing variants. With its openly revolutionary stance and in its struggle against these different currents and ideas, the RCI will be able to win over the best youth and workers.

- ▶ **IS recommendation: Reject in favour of amendment 33**

ment itself. Depending on circumstances, we would usually start in a friendly way, starting with the things we agree on, then pointing out how the proposed solutions are inadequate, linking to the broader tasks of the struggle for socialism. As Lenin put it in April 1917: “to present a patient, systematic, and persistent explanation of the errors of their tactics, an explanation especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses.”

At the same time, it is clear that a growing section of the youth identifies with communist ideas as the most radical alternative against the capitalist system **and can be reached directly with our full programme.** This is not a majority, not even amongst the youth, but certainly this is a significant development.

- ▶ **IS recommendation: Accept**

AMENDMENT 33

Add after paragraph 262, amend paragraph 263 and renumber (IS):

In all these movements we encounter a wide array of ideas, including feminism, reformism, Stalinism or nationalism. It is our task to raise a class position, standing out clearly in a sea of petty bourgeois confusion. But this is always a concrete question, starting from the ideas we encounter, as well as the tasks and questions raised by the move-

THE DEGENERATION AND COLLAPSE OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL — IN DEFENCE OF OUR HERITAGE

INTRODUCTION

“Learning not to forget the past in order to foresee the future is our first, our most important task.” (*A Wretched Document*, 27 July 1929, *Writings of Leon Trotsky*, Vol 1, 1929, New York 1975, p. 198-212)

“One of the basic principles of dialectics is that there is no such thing as abstract truth, truth is always concrete.” (Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, May 1904)

This document is about the degeneration and collapse of the Fourth International, founded by Trotsky in 1938, and the defence of the genuine ideas and methods of Trotskyism. This subject may seem at first sight to be only of historical interest, but this is certainly not the case.

In fact, these developments hold enormous lessons for us today. In particular,

they provide a deeper appreciation and explanation of who we are, and the key role played by comrade Ted Grant in defending these genuine traditions.

The question of the degeneration of the Fourth International has been dealt with at different times and different places, not least in the *Programme of the International*, written by Ted Grant in 1970. In the past, this history played a key role in the education of our cadres.

However, given the rapid growth of the International over recent times, it is important to remind our comrades, especially the new recruits, of our history and tradition.

Although the Fourth International was destroyed, the programme and methods of the International under Trotsky's leadership are alive today and embodied in the work of our International, the RCI. This is not an idle boast. It can be demonstrated,



as we will show, in the theoretical contribution and documents produced by our tendency over the last eighty years.

The need to defend our heritage – together with our historic responsibility to set the record straight – is clearly very important. This is especially the case given the numerous distortions and outright lies put in circulation by the sects, in order to cover up their own past crimes and mistakes.

Above all, this means a recognition of the indispensable role that Ted Grant played throughout this period in defending the genuine ideas and methods of Trotskyism.

He continued the work of Trotsky under the most difficult circumstances, and it is to this tireless work that we owe our existence. It is this, and this alone, that gives us a right to exist and a justifiable claim to represent the genuine traditions of revolutionary Trotskyism.

Our tendency was born in the struggle to defend the ideas of Marxism against the pernicious ideas of Stalinism and reformism, but also against the revisionist ideas of the so-called leaders of the Fourth International. These included people like Cannon, Pablo, Mandel, Frank, Healy, Maitan, Lambert, and their supporters, who at that time, and in the years that followed, made one ultra-left or opportunist blunder after another. These mistakes arose above all from a fundamentally false method.

In order to furnish unquestionable proof of this assertion, we have found it necessary to quote from documents of the past. This may give rise to some difficulties for

the reader, but the requirements of historical accuracy must take precedence over literary style or ease of reading.

DIFFICULT CONDITIONS

When Leon Trotsky was dying from the blow of a Stalinist assassin, his last words were, “tell the comrades, I am convinced of the victory of the Fourth International. Go forward!”

But in the years that followed, it became clear that the human material Trotsky was dealing with was not capable of rising to the great tasks posed by history.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to point to the reasons why from its inception the Trotskyist movement was plagued by constant internal upheavals, crises and splits.

From its inception, the Left Opposition found itself in a very difficult position, both in Russia and internationally. Numerically weak, its ranks were necessarily filled with all kinds of elements who were united by their opposition to Stalin and the bureaucracy, but not necessarily by anything else.

It is hard to find an example from history of any movement that suffered from such an extreme degree of persecution. The faction led by Zinoviev and Kamenev soon broke away and capitulated shamefully to Stalin. This action produced widespread confusion and demoralisation in the ranks of the Opposition.

Not a few supporters of the Left Opposition succumbed to unbearable pressure and followed the lead of Zinoviev, Kame-



nev and Radek, capitulating to Stalin. Most, if not all of them were later physically liquidated.

These difficulties were replicated in the small groups that adhered to the Opposition in foreign Communist Parties. Although many of Trotsky's followers were courageous and honest revolutionaries, others were frankly not the best material.

They were negatively affected by years of defeats, particularly the victory of Stalinism in Russia. The result was a general feeling of depression and disorientation.

It took a superhuman effort on Trotsky's part to establish a firm political foundation for the new organisation that emerged from the shipwreck of the Communist International.

Many elements that had nothing to do with Trotskyism gravitated towards the Opposition. There were Zinovievists, anarchists, ultraleftists, as well as some unprincipled adventurers like Raymond Molinier in France, not to mention a considerable number of assorted misfits and oddballs seeking a political home.

Naturally, we are dealing here with mainly young, inexperienced and politically naïve elements, many of them drawn from student and petty-bourgeois backgrounds. They brought with them many confused and alien ideas.

Even in the American SWP there were people like James Burnham, for example, who was never really a Trotskyist and arguably not even a Marxist, as his repudiation of dialectical materialism later demonstrated.

But Trotsky obviously could not always choose the human material he was obliged to work with. In 1935, Trotsky held a discussion with a left-wing member of the socialist youth in France called Fred Zeller, in the course of which Zeller made some serious criticisms of the French Trotskyists.

In reply, Trotsky did not attempt to defend the members of the French section, but merely replied laconically: "You have to work with the material that you have on hand." These words clearly conveyed his attitude towards many of those who called themselves 'Trotskyists'. They were a devastating comment on the leaders of the future Fourth International, about whom Trotsky had very few illusions from the start. (See "On Organizational Problems", November 1935).

The same year, Trotsky would comment:

"It would be absurd to deny the presence of sectarian tendencies in our midst. They have been laid bare by an entire series of discussions and splits. Indeed, how could an element of sectarianism have failed to manifest itself in an ideological movement which stands irreconcilably opposed to all the dominant organisations in the working class, and which is subjected to monstrous, absolutely unprecedented persecutions all over the world?" ('Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International')

Sorting out the resulting mess and purging undesirable and alien class elements proved to be a long and painful process.



This was the reason for many splits and crises in the following years.

In the words of the German poet Heine, Trotsky had “sown dragon’s teeth and harvested fleas”.

THE AMERICAN SWP

The leading role in the early years was played by the American section, which later became the SWP, but events demonstrated that it suffered from serious political deficiencies.

James Cannon, the leading figure in the American group, was probably the most capable of the international leaders in the early years. He had a long history of work in the American labour movement going back to the days of the IWW – a fact that Trotsky greatly appreciated. He had many good qualities as an organiser, but he also had an extremely negative side.

Cannon started out as a follower of Zinoviev and never rid himself of his Zinovievist tendencies. This was the school, not of Bolshevism, but of manoeuvres, intrigues and the substitution of organisational methods for clean political debate.

Trotsky highly appreciated Cannon’s loyalty, but he never agreed with Cannon’s heavy-handed organisational methods. He knew very well that this was a finished recipe for crises and splits. Trotsky makes the interesting point in *In Defence of Marxism*:

“Our own sections inherited some Comintern venom in the sense that many comrades are inclined to the abuse of such measures as expulsion, splits or

threats of expulsion and splits.” (in *In Defence of Marxism*, p.97)

It is clear that when he wrote these lines, Trotsky had Cannon in mind. He supported Cannon’s political stand against the petty-bourgeois opposition of Burnham and Shachtman, but he was deeply uneasy about the hasty and excessively administrative approach that he used against them.

In fact, while maintaining an intransigent political stance, he opposed a split in the American section, preferring, as always, the weapon of sound political argument and theoretical clarification, as opposed to the blunt weapon of bullying, threats and expulsions, which made a split inevitable.

As long as Trotsky was alive, he was able to keep his followers on a correct political line. But following his death in 1940, and faced with changing objective conditions, they proved incapable of rearming the movement.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The founding of the Fourth International in September 1938 was without doubt a historic landmark. This marked an attempt to galvanise the cadres, politically and organisationally, for the historic tasks that lay ahead.

Trotsky predicted that the coming Second World War would give rise to a revolutionary wave that would put all parties and tendencies to the test. The old Internationals – the Second, the Third, and the so-called London Bureau – were rotten and had become a barrier to the success of the socialist revolution. Trotsky believed



that on the basis of the coming world cataclysm and its aftermath, these organisations would be shattered.

In 1938, Trotsky made the bold prediction that within the next ten years “not one stone upon another” would be left of the old organisations, and the programme of the Fourth International would be the guide of millions. (‘On the Founding of the Fourth International’, *Fourth International*, Vol. 1 No. 5, October 1940)

But this was only a tentative prognosis. A perspective is not a crystal ball that permits us to predict the precise course of events, it is a conditional hypothesis, which must be corrected in line with actual developments. That is ABC for anyone remotely acquainted with the method of Marxism.

In relation to the war in Finland in November 1939, Trotsky explained:

“All those who seek exact predictions of concrete events should consult the astrologists. [...] I made reservations several times as to the conditionality of my prognosis as *one* of several possible variants.” (‘Balance sheet of the Finnish Events’ in *In Defence of Marxism*, p.234)

These words are crystal-clear. But they remained a closed book for the so-called leaders of the Fourth, who proceeded on the basis that what Trotsky wrote in 1938 was written in stone and could not be changed, irrespective of changing conditions.

That is the opposite of Marxism and in flagrant contradiction to everything Trotsky wrote about it. This is not to say that

Trotsky’s original predictions were entirely false. On the contrary, in his analysis of the world situation, he showed a far deeper understanding and ability to predict events than any other world leader.

Some of the more farsighted bourgeois politicians clearly understood the risk of revolutionary implications arising out of a war. Coulondre, the French ambassador to Germany, told Hitler on 25 August 1939: “I would also have the fear that as a result of the war, there would be only one real victor – Mr Trotsky.”

Of course, the words of Coulondre were simply personifying the revolution in the form of Trotsky. However, events turned out differently as a result of the outcome of the war.

THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY

The assassination of Trotsky dealt a mortal blow to the young and inexperienced forces of the Fourth International. Without Trotsky’s guidance, the other leaders proved to be completely useless.

It is interesting to note that Stalin, whose experience of Bolshevism meant that he understood the danger posed to his regime by even a small international revolutionary movement, understood the vital role of Trotsky in the Fourth International.

When some of his agents complained that they were spending an excessive amount of time and money on the assassination of a single individual, Stalin answered that they were mistaken – that without Trotsky the Fourth International was nothing, be-



cause, as he said, “they do not have good leaders.” He was not wrong.

Faced with an entirely new situation, they were unable to make the necessary adjustments and completely lost their bearings. That had a fatal effect on the development of the new International.

The war developed in a way that could not have been foreseen by anyone, even by the greatest genius. And the outcome of the war, especially the strengthening of Stalinism, upended Trotsky’s 1938 perspective.

However, it was not only Trotsky’s perspective that was falsified, but also the perspectives of the imperialists – Roosevelt and Churchill – not to mention those of Hitler and Stalin, who made the biggest mistakes of all. The outcome of the war between the USSR and Nazi Germany was the most decisive event that determined the entire situation.

STALIN’S BLUNDER

Stalin, the so-called ‘great military genius’, in reality, had placed the USSR in the gravest danger. The Soviet Union had been rendered largely defenceless by the mass purges of the Red Army in 1937-38 and later in 1941, just before the German invasion of the USSR.

When German generals objected to the idea of an attack on the Soviet Union, arguing that it was a fatal mistake to fight war on two fronts, Hitler replied that the Soviet Union was no longer a problem, since they have no good generals.

The notorious Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939 was, in reality, a defensive move on the part of the Soviet Union. By signing a non-aggression pact with Hitler, Stalin believed that he had avoided the danger of a German invasion. He was mistaken.

Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 took Stalin by surprise. The cost paid by the people of the Soviet Union was truly appalling.

The imperialists had hoped that the war between Germany and the Soviet Union would lead to their mutual exhaustion, allowing the Americans and British to step in and sweep up the spoils.

The Second World War in Europe was reduced essentially to a life-and-death struggle between Stalinist Russia and Hitler’s Germany, armed with the combined resources of Europe behind it.

Initially, the position of the USSR seemed to be hopeless.

Trotsky had warned that the chief danger to the Soviet Union in the event of war was that an imperialist army (for example, the Americans) would bring a mass of cheap commodities in their baggage train. But things turned out differently. The German invasion came in the form of mass murder, concentration camps and gas chambers. The Nazis regarded the Soviet people as a subhuman race and treated them as such.

As a result, in spite of the crimes of Stalin and bureaucracy, the Soviet masses rallied to defend the gains of the October Revolution and fought with the most astonishing bravery against Hitler to repel the invad-



ers. Despite all the odds, the Red Army stopped the Nazi invasion in its tracks and then went on to inflict a crushing defeat on Hitler.

This played a decisive role and effectively transformed the entire situation. It gave the Soviet Union colossal prestige and this served to strengthen the Stalinist regime for a whole historical period, contrary to Trotsky's expectations.

This fact enabled them to maintain firm control over the mass movements, which they used to betray the revolutionary wave following the war.

This historic betrayal provided the political premise for the economic recovery, which led to the post-war boom: an unprecedented upswing of capitalism. This in turn, provided the capitalist system with a new lease of life.

Rather than Stalinism being overthrown, as Trotsky expected, it emerged greatly strengthened, with the Red Army crushing Hitler's armies and occupying large parts of Eastern Europe.

Two great powers thus emerged on a world scale: on the one hand the Soviet Union, and on the other, the United States, which now became the dominant imperialist power.

The United States never suffered the horrific destruction experienced by Europe during the war. It emerged from the war with its industries intact and its treasuries full to overflowing.

It was in a position to underwrite European capitalism and provide the necessary economic assistance to launch a period of economic recovery that was in complete contrast to the situation that followed the First World War.

All this meant that Trotsky's 1938 perspective had been falsified by history. If Trotsky had lived, he would certainly have revised the 1938 perspective and reorientated the movement in this manner.

However, the leaders of the Fourth International: Cannon, Hansen, Pablo, Mandel, Maitan and Pierre Frank – and their supporters – failed miserably. They were not up to the task. Incapable of understanding the method of Trotsky, namely the method of Marxism, they simply repeated the out-of-date perspective of 1938 of immediate war and revolution as if nothing had happened.

They merely repeated like mindless parrots what Trotsky had said before his death, as if the clock had stopped. They never understood Trotsky's dialectical method and his approach to perspectives.

This refusal to recognise what was in front of them led to one mistake after another, which was to produce an almighty crisis within the International.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

The Marxist method of historical materialism seeks the fundamental forces in history in objective factors – particularly the development of the productive forces. However, historical materialism has never



denied the importance of the subjective factor or the role of individuals in history.

There are many parallels between the war between nations and the class struggle. In a war, the importance of good generals is clearly a key factor, and one which can be decisive. The importance of good generals when the army is advancing is self-evident. But the quality of leadership is even more important at times when the army is forced to retreat.

With good generals, a retreat can be carried out in good order, with a minimum of losses and preserving the bulk of one's forces from destruction. But bad generals will turn a retreat into a rout.

This is precisely the case with the Fourth International, through their complete incapacity, the leadership turned a retreat, which was necessary, into a rout. With their methods, they ended up destroying the movement created with such great difficulties by Leon Trotsky.

THE ROLE OF TED GRANT

The only tendency that emerges with any credit from this existential crisis of Trotskyism was the Workers' International League (later, the Revolutionary Communist Party) in Britain.

They alone were able to make a correct appraisal of the new situation and draw the conclusions. And they alone have any right to be considered as the real defenders of Trotsky's method and the sole legitimate continuers of his legacy.

Lenin was the real defender of Marxism after the death of Marx and Engels. And after Lenin's death, that role fell to Leon Trotsky. In the same way, following Trotsky's death, the genuine defender of his ideas and method was Ted Grant.

It is not possible here to provide a detailed account of Ted's life and work. We limit ourselves to a very brief outline. For a fuller account, we refer the reader to the comprehensive biography written by Alan Woods: *Ted Grant, the Permanent Revolutionary*.

Ted joined the Trotskyist movement in Johannesburg in 1929. By 1934, he had emigrated from South Africa to Britain in search of wider horizons.

There, he joined the Trotskyists working in the Independent Labour Party (ILP), but with opportunities drying up in the ILP, on Trotsky's advice, the young comrades turned to work in the Labour Party, especially its youth section.

In 1937, a further group of South African comrades, including Ralph Lee, arrived in London and joined Ted and Jock Haston in the Paddington branch of the Militant Group. They became by far the most active members in the organisation.

The method of the leadership reflected the largely petty-bourgeois nature of the Militant Group, typical of the small-circle mentality, with their petty intrigues, and little connection to the working class. This resulted in continuous splits from 1934 onwards.



At the end of 1937, eight comrades decided to establish a new organisation, the Workers' International League (WIL).

The founding of the WIL marked a decisive break from the old "Trotskyist" groups of the previous period and marked the real origins of our tendency, the beginning of genuine Trotskyism in Britain.

Ted quickly emerged as the group's key theoretician, its political secretary, and the editor of its new paper, the *Socialist Appeal*.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH TROTSKY

Within six weeks of establishing the WIL, on 12 February 1938, they sent a letter to Trotsky in Mexico explaining that the group had established a printing press.

Trotsky was suitably impressed. On 15 April 1938, Trotsky wrote a letter to Charles Sumner in Britain, whom Trotsky had been in touch with since 1937, informing him of the intended trip to Britain of James Cannon to help establish a genuine section of the Fourth International.

Not long afterwards, in early June, the WIL had produced the new edition of his *Lessons of Spain*, with an introduction written by Ted Grant and Ralph Lee. They proudly sent a copy to Trotsky.

On 29 June 1938, Trotsky again wrote a letter to Charles Summer, which was full of praise for the WIL's initiative: "I received your edition of my Spain pamphlet with your excellent introduction", he wrote.

Again, Trotsky goes on to congratulate the WIL comrades for establishing a print

shop: "It was really a good revolutionary idea to create one's own printing shop." He ends his letter: "My warmest greetings to you and your friends."

Trotsky's letter is extremely significant as regards our history. Firstly, the letter does not appear anywhere in Trotsky's writings, published by Pathfinder Press, the publishing arm of the American SWP. The letter was certainly in their possession.

The letter only surfaced in 2018, and came into our possession completely by accident. It was truly an extraordinary turn of fate for which we are eternally grateful. This suppressed letter, which praises the WIL, can be regarded as our long-lost birth certificate. It is the only letter in existence in which Trotsky himself refers to the WIL, and in such glowing colours.

It was deliberately suppressed by the leaders of the SWP (and Cannon in particular), in their attempts to shamefully belittle the WIL for reasons of personal prestige and spite, as we will see.

CANNON'S PERNICIOUS ROLE

In August 1938, James Cannon visited Britain, with a view to fusing the different Trotskyist groups into a single organisation ahead of the founding conference of the Fourth International.

At this time, there were four groups in Britain: the Revolutionary Socialist League (led by CLR James, Wicks and Dewar); the Militant Group (led by Harber and Jackson); one group in Scotland, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (led by Maitland



and Tait); and the WIL (led by Ralph Lee, Jock Haston, and Grant).

However, these groups had widely different approaches, from open work to the entrust tactic, and how this should be applied. These tactical disagreements posed insurmountable difficulties in the way of practical joint work.

To overcome this difficulty, it was first necessary to hold a thorough discussion on tactics, programme and decide a common line of action. On that basis, there could be a fusion.

But Cannon ignored this and tried to unify these groups on a purely organisational basis. He saw the differences over orientation as being of little importance.

Cannon therefore called a Unity Conference of the different groups to push through a formal unification. While the WIL agreed to attend, they were opposed to a false unity without real discussion. Otherwise, such unity on this shallow basis was simply a recipe for future splits.

But Cannon wanted unity no matter what the cost. Therefore, there was no discussion about political perspectives or any tactical differences at the Unity Conference. Instead, all groups were instead merely asked to sign a 'Peace and Unity Agreement', drafted by Cannon, and given 20 minutes to make up their mind.

The WIL decided this approach was unprincipled and therefore remained outside of the 'united' organisation.

The following month, in early September 1938, the Founding Conference of the Fourth International took place in Paris.

Although outside of the 'united' organisation, the WIL expressed the wish to become, if not a full section, then a sympathetic section of the Fourth International. Cannon seemed to be in agreement with the idea of a sympathetic section, and the WIL was asked to send a delegate to the Founding Conference. Unfortunately, they did not have the funds to send anyone. Instead, they handed a statement about their position to a delegate, so as to be forwarded to the conference.

Cannon had clearly changed his mind by the conference. Offended by the WIL's refusal to unite with the other groups, he took the opportunity to slander the WIL and block its efforts to become a sympathetic section of the International. WIL's message to the congress was not distributed to the delegates. It was a spiteful gesture, which revealed Cannon's method of doing things.

The Founding Conference went on to endorse the new unified section, which took the name of the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), as the official British section.

Cannon, who now nurtured this resentment against the WIL, reported to Trotsky that the WIL's "attitude was condemned by the international conference". He argued for a "firm and resolute stand" against the WIL and "in no case to acknowledge its legitimacy". But, he complained the RSL was "not accustomed to our 'brutal' (i.e. Bolshevik) treatment of groups who play



with splits.” (James P. Cannon, ‘Impressions of the Founding Conference, 12 October 1938’, in Joseph Hansen, James P. Cannon – *The Internationalist*, July 1980)

This last comment tells us a great deal about Cannon’s methods. It was precisely the way in which Cannon operated against people who opposed him within the SWP. Such methods were to become the accepted methods of the bureaucratic regime in the so-called Fourth International.

We do not have Trotsky’s response to Cannon’s slanderous remarks. He seems to have ignored them. Having no other first-hand information, he clearly preferred to wait and see how things would develop. It was clear that Trotsky, who never formed a hasty opinion, was reserving judgment about the WIL, which, after all, he had earlier openly admired. Trotsky never attacked the WIL, as some sectarians claim. In fact, the only thing that exists on record is Trotsky’s praise regarding WIL’s initiatives.

“From that time onwards”, explained Ted Grant, “Cannon was to nurture a deeply held grudge against the WIL and its leadership, which was to have serious repercussions in the future.” (*History of British Trotskyism*, p.63)

This grudge, which turned into venomous hatred, can be seen from what Cannon himself stated later:

“All the crimes and mistakes of this rotten-to-the-core Haston faction are directly traceable to its origin as an unprincipled clique in 1938. When I

was in England a little later that year, on the eve of the First World Congress, I denounced the Lee-Haston faction as tainted by unprincipledness at its birth. I never had a bit of confidence in them throughout all their subsequent development, regardless of what theses they wrote or voted for at the moment.” (Cannon, *Speeches to the Party*, pp. 296-297)

This summed up Cannon’s whole approach. As far as the ‘leaders’ of the Fourth were concerned, James Cannon was probably the best of them. However, after Trotsky’s death, he saw himself as *the leader*: the sole person entitled to represent Trotsky’s legacy.

But he was not up to it. Cannon was certainly no theoretician. Not only that – he was actually proud of this fact. “I brought down my heavy hand against anybody ever calling me a theoretician”, he once explained. (Cannon, *Writings & Speeches 1940-43*, p.360)

He was essentially an ‘organisation man – a narrow-minded ‘practico’, with only a very basic understanding of Marxism. Lacking a profound grasp of theory, he was incapable of providing serious answers to critics, preferring to denounce them in the harshest language and, if necessary, to resort to administrative measures to silence them. He went on to emphasise his role as the ‘hard man’:

“When I came out of the nine years of the CP. I was a first-class factional hoodlum. If not, how would I ever have survived? All I knew when some-



body started a fight, let him have it. That existence was all I knew.”

This was clearly shown in the debates with Schachtman and the opposition in the SWP in 1939-40, which Trotsky severely criticised. Later, Cannon admitted that Trotsky was right and he was wrong:

“I think Trotsky is right when he says that in that long drawn-out fight between Cannon and Abern that historical right is on the side of Cannon. But that doesn’t mean I was right about everything. No, I was wrong about many things, including my methods and my impatience and rudeness with comrades and repulsing them.”

In other words, Cannon came straight out of the bad school of Zinovievism that habitually utilized unscrupulous organisational manoeuvres to silence opponents, denouncing and shouting them down, instead of patiently answering their arguments, as Lenin and Trotsky had always done.

The fact that the Founding Conference of the Fourth International endorsed the RSL and condemned the WIL was soon shown to have been a mistake.

Hardly had the ink dried on the ‘Peace and Unity Agreement’ when the cracks in the RSL – ‘unified’ organisation – began to appear. These widened into splits. The RSP had split away before the end of the year. The ‘lefts’ soon followed, setting up their own Revolutionary Workers League (RWL). A general disintegration followed.

The WIL wrote a statement, which explained:

“Once again the old situation existed, except that it was more chaotic than at any time in the past. Our movement continued to consist of ‘general staffs’ but without the armies.”

Cannon lamented this fact, but he was never prepared to admit it. The WIL, in contrast, went from strength to strength.

As a report from the WIL explains:

“During this period the WIL continued its work, convinced that the only way out of the impasse of British Trotskyism was to turn our backs on the old clique spirit and petty-bourgeois milieu and draw in fresh workers to reinforce the ranks of the movement. That we suffered from the denunciation of the IS is undoubted. But as we had the correct policy and the correct attitude, the general harmony within our ranks gave us a superiority in the orientation and organisation of our cadres. A new phase began in the development of our movement.” (<https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/backiss/vol1/no1/wil.html>)

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVES TO NEW YORK

When the war broke out in September 1939, it was decided to transfer the headquarters of the Fourth International to New York. This meant that the SWP in effect ran the organisation during the war, with Sam Gordon, Cannon’s obe-



dient stooge, appointed as its Administrative Secretary.

With the war and Hitler's occupation of Europe, the European sections were forced underground or ceased to function. Even where they managed to operate, they were plagued by political confusion and differences. In reality, the contact between New York and the remnants of the Trotskyist groups in Europe was almost non-existent.

There were differences especially over Trotsky's Proletarian Military Policy, which was met with widespread opposition, with some sections even accusing Trotsky of 'social-patriotism'.

This was no secondary difference. The Proletarian Military Policy was an especially important contribution that Trotsky made at the time of the outbreak of the Second World War. It was an extension of Lenin's policy of 'revolutionary defeatism' during the First World War. But whereas Lenin's policy had been directed at the cadres, Trotsky's policy was aimed at the masses. Trotsky explained the revolutionaries would need to adapt their programme to the needs of the situation and take into consideration the defencist moods in the working class. While we opposed the imperialist war, we needed to connect with the workers who wanted to fight Hitler.

The working class could place no trust in the capitalists. They were not pacifists and needed their own revolutionary military programme, the idea of which was for the workers to take power and lead a revolutionary war against fascism.

But many sections of the Fourth International were infected with sectarianism, a leftover from the earlier period.

The British RSL – the official section, let us not forget, of the Fourth International – opposed the policy outright, while the Belgian section deleted all references to it in their version of the 1940 manifesto drafted by Trotsky. The French also had their "reservations", as did the European Secretariat, led by Marcel Hic, and following his arrest, by Raptis (Michel Pablo). As can be seen, this opposition to this policy – reflecting sectarian tendencies – reached the very top of the Fourth International.

One contribution to the IS from "AM", who was either French or Belgian, had the title, "On the Subject of the Proletarian Military Policy: Did the Old Man Kill Trotskyism?" It went on to accuse Trotsky of "pure and simple chauvinism". It continued in a similar vein: "We must openly and frankly pose the question whether we can continue to bear the name 'Trotskyist', when the leader of the Fourth International has dragged it into the mire of social-chauvinism."

This gives you some indication of the complete confusion that reigned in the ranks of the Fourth International at this time.

THE DEMISE OF THE RSL

By the time of Trotsky's death in August 1940, the RSL was in a dismal state. In the same year, the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International deplored "the fact that no less than four groups claiming adherence to the Fourth International exist



outside the ranks of our official section in Great Britain". In a fit of optimism, the resolution stated that "the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International hails the coming unified British section". (*Documents of the Fourth International*, p.359)

The problem was that the RSL was a sectarian grouping. It rejected Trotsky's Proletarian Military Policy, and its entrism work in the Labour Party had become a complete fetish, when the internal life in the Labour Party had collapsed. The RSL's activity was reduced to mainly discussing amongst themselves, an expression of their isolation. They had in effect 'gone underground' – although no one really noticed the fact.

By contrast, the comrades of the WIL threw themselves into the work as the war broke out in September 1939, adapting to the new situation. Throughout this period, the comrades conducted the most effective revolutionary work of any of the Fourth International groups during the war, enthusiastically applying the Proletarian Military Policy in the most skilful fashion. This was applied effectively in the factories and within the armed forces on a scale not seen anywhere else in the world.

The WIL was the most successful Trotskyist group at this time in applying Trotsky's method, demonstrating a firm grasp of the ideas and a great flexibility of tactics. This approach was outlined in their document *Preparing for Power*, (*Workers' International News*, Vol. 5, No. 6, 1942) written by Ted Grant, as well as his reply to the RSL, (in *The Unbroken Thread*, p.11).

As the war went on, the sectarianism of the RSL was increasingly becoming an embarrassment to the Americans, especially Cannon. Not only had they rejected the Proletarian Military Policy; they even made rejection of this policy a condition of membership! By the summer of 1943, the membership had shrunk to 23. It had effectively collapsed. Something had to be done, but as far as Cannon was concerned, this would have to be done without in any way admitting that the WIL had been correct from the very beginning. This was accomplished by a set of manoeuvres.

As early as June 1942, the International leadership wrote to the RSL, urging them to discuss fusion with the WIL. While the RSL rejected fusion, they agreed to a series of political debates. But these debates only served to widen the differences.

The IS was keen to resolve the problem by organisational means. In this way, they began to collaborate with Gerry Healy, who had himself long nurtured a grudge against the WIL leadership of Grant and Haston.

GERRY HEALY

Healy was one of the original members of the WIL. He had a certain organisational ability and energy, but was clearly an unstable element. He was prone to resigning from the organisation in a light-minded fashion as a means of blackmailing the leadership. Despite his ultimatums and clashes with comrades, each time he was brought back in the hope that his organisational talent could be used in some way.



Then, at a Central Committee meeting in February 1943, Healy resigned yet again, saying that he was joining the ILP as it was impossible to “continue further work with J. Haston, M. Lee and E. Grant”. Following this walkout, he was unanimously expelled by the Central Committee.

Once more he was later readmitted, but given his previous record he was not allowed to assume any positions of responsibility. This simply increased the grudge he held against the leadership. As a result, he set to work to build a faction within the WIL on behalf of the IS and Cannon, with whom he had made contact in 1943.

With the disintegration of the RSL, the IS was forced to step in and reconstitute the RSL through a farcical shotgun marriage between the different remnants. Following this, ‘negotiations’ with the WIL resulted in the agreement to establish the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) in March 1944.

In reality, given the state of the RSL, the merger represented a complete takeover by the WIL. This was reflected in the makeup of the delegates at the 1944 RCP Founding Congress: while the WIL had 52 delegates, the RSL had 17 delegates, made up of several elements.

Then within a few months of the fusion, a campaign was underway by the International leadership to discredit the new RCP leadership. A report of the RCP Founding Congress appeared in the international bulletin of the SWP (June 1944), which contained errors, distortions, slanders and baseless criticisms against the British lead-

ership, accusing it of “a deviation of national colouration”.

“Naturally”, states the report, “the leadership carries over into the RCP all positive as well as the negative characteristics that attached to it in the WIL.”

The RCP leaders reacted swiftly to answer this hostile ‘report’. They sent the SWP leaders a stinging reply which demolished the slanders brick by brick.

The letter also attacked the underhand methods employed by the SWP leadership, which only served to sow distrust within the International.

The RCP reply ended:

“In concluding this letter, let us say that we have had no pleasure in penning it. It is with the greatest reluctance that we have taken time off from more pressing political tasks. If the tone appears sharper than some comrades might think necessary in the circumstances, let us say we have deliberately toned [it] down. We wish to minimise and not exaggerate the situation. The responsibility for the conflict rests entirely on the shoulders of Stuart [Sam Gordon] and his immediate friends. We want a loyal international collaboration with the SWP and its leadership with whom we have political agreement on all outstanding questions. We object, however, to the American leadership, or a faction of it, *having [an] organisational faction or clique irons in the British fire*. That is the international



method of Zinoviev and not of Trotsky.” (Emphasis in original)

The letter was signed in the name of the Political Bureau of the RCP and dated January 1945.

Without doubt, the RCP letter was regarded as an affront by Cannon, who was now more determined than ever to crush the ‘disloyal’ British leadership, by whatever means.

MORROW AND GOLDMAN

Given the refusal of the International leadership, especially the leaders of the SWP, to recognise reality, an opposition began to form around Albert Goldman and Felix Morrow, two leading members of the SWP, towards the end of 1943.

Morrow and Goldman objected to the SWP leaders’ assertion that bourgeois democracy after the war was ruled out.

At the 1943 October plenum of the SWP, the majority resolution stated: “Europe, today enslaved by the Nazis, will tomorrow be overrun by equally predatory Anglo-American imperialism” as they impose “military monarchist-clerical dictatorships under the tutelage and hegemony of Anglo-American big business.”

It went on: “The choice, from the Roosevelt-Churchill point of view, is a Franco-type government or the spectre of socialist revolution.” (*Fourth International*, Vol.4 No.11, December 1943).

The later resolution adopted by the Sixth Convention of the SWP in November 1944 explained:

“Bourgeois democracy, which flowered with the rise and expansion of capitalism and with the moderation of class conflicts that furnished a basis for collaboration between the classes in the advanced capitalist countries, is outlived in Europe today. European capitalism, in death agony, is torn by irreconcilable and sanguinary class struggles. The Anglo-American imperialists understand that democracy is today incompatible with the continued existence of capitalist exploitation.” (*Fourth International*, Vol. 5 No. 11, December 1944).

In opposition to this, Morrow and Goldman argued that the bourgeoisie could use bourgeois-democratic methods to derail the European revolution. They also believed that, given the successes of the Red Army, Stalinism would be strengthened, and not weakened, as the SWP leaders maintained. Furthermore, they believed that the Fourth International should energetically fight for democratic and transitional demands.

Morrow and Goldman were correct both in demanding a change to the 1938 perspective and in their criticisms of the SWP leaders. Nevertheless, they were clearly feeling their way forward in attempting to present an alternative.

Given the weakness of the forces of Trotskyism, Morrow and Goldman eventually argued that the Trotskyist groups should enter the mass organisations. However, there was no ferment or the development of mass oppositional currents within



these organisations, and so no basis for such an approach.

Whatever the shortcomings of the Morrow-Goldman position, they were nevertheless at least attempting to re-evaluate the situation, given the peculiar way the war had developed. Their position was certainly pointing in many respects in the right direction. The problem that Morrow and Goldman faced was that they were in a small minority within the SWP, a party dominated by the Cannon regime. If there had existed a healthy regime within the SWP, then their ideas could have been debated democratically, which would have provided the basis for coming to a more correct position.

What is certain is that their position was a thousand times more correct than the Cannon leadership.

THE CANNON REGIME

But the Cannon leadership stuck to its guns and simply repeated Trotsky's 1938 perspective. Despite the changed conditions, they denied reality and buried their heads in the sand. Cannon even went so far as to deny the Second World War had ended in 1945.

The British RCP came out against this nonsense. Cannon could not tolerate this, and condemned both Morrow/Goldman and the RCP.

At a meeting of the SWP National Committee on 6-7 October 1945, Cannon launched an all-out attack. Cannon ended his speech, which was vitriolic content, with the following words:

"You are in a bloc and you are already ashamed of it openly, but we will expose that bloc and all the rest of it. And we will take the fight on the international field. You go ahead and line up your bloc. We will work with those people who believe in the same principles, the same programme and methods, that we do. And we will fight it out and see what happens in the International." (Cannon, *Writings & Speeches, 1945-47*, pp.181-183)

In the end, faced with constant harassment and bullying, Goldman was driven out and Morrow was expelled from the SWP in 1946.

It was in this same meeting where he attacked the RCP that Cannon admitted that he had been a follower of Zinoviev for nine years when he was in the leadership of the American Communist Party. "I, like every other leader of the American party in those days, could be said to be a Zinovievist", he admitted. That was a very bad school, and the lessons he learned there remained with him to the end.

The methods practiced within the SWP were in marked contrast to the democratic regime that operated within the British section. Within the RCP, those who were struggling to re-evaluate the situation in Britain were in a large majority. They belonged to a party that encouraged the development of such ideas, free from any bureaucratic obstacles and slanders of 'scepticism'.



GROUND-BREAKING ANALYSIS

The only section of the International that was able to correctly re-evaluate the changed situation was the RCP. Ted Grant explained that the situation was completely different to that outlined in 1940. The new situation had raised unforeseen and difficult theoretical problems, which needed to be answered. Ted's ground-breaking analysis was contained in *The Changed Relationship of Forces in Europe and the Role of the Fourth International*, and endorsed by the RCP's Central Committee in March 1945.

This perspective explained that the political premise for a relative stabilisation of the political situation was at that moment a possibility in Western Europe. The revolutionary wave, which Trotsky had correctly predicted, had been betrayed by the Stalinist and Social-Democratic leaders.

In Italy and France, they entered bourgeois governments to rescue capitalism. The forces of the Fourth International were unfortunately too weak to challenge this. This betrayal then formed the basis of what Ted Grant called "counter-revolution in a 'democratic' form".

He wrote:

"Social democracy saved capitalism after the last war. Today there are two traitor 'internationals' at the service of capital – Stalinism and social democracy.

[...]

The task of Anglo-American imperialism to restore 'order' to Europe, to establish the rule of capital, assumes the shape of complicated and dexterous manoeuvres. To bludgeon the masses will be difficult at this stage and it will be necessary to deceive them with the panaceas of 'progress', 'reforms', 'democracy', as against the horrors of totalitarian rule."

On the question of the fate of the Soviet Union, he argued that given the war weariness, especially Europe, the admiration and support for the Red Army, the sympathy and warm support for the Soviet Union taken together made it extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible for the Allies to launch an attack on the Soviet Union in the immediate post-war period.

Ted developed these ideas in *The Character of the European Revolution*, published in October 1945:

"A 'democratic' phase in Europe will not result from the objective need for a phase of democratic revolution but because of the sell-out of the old workers' organisations... Only the weakness of the revolutionary party and the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism has given capitalism a breathing-space. Seeing that it is virtually impossible to rule by the methods of fascist or military dictatorship, the bourgeoisie has prepared to switch, for the time being, to the bourgeois-democratic manipulation of their Stalino-reformist agents. This does not constitute a democratic rev-



olution but, on the contrary, a preventative, democratic counter-revolution against the proletariat.”

This allowed them to recognise and understand the important changes that were being prepared. From the very beginning of 1945, the RCP had developed fundamental political differences with the international leadership, who proved incapable of understanding the new balance of forces and the need to rearm the movement with a new perspective.

CLINGING TO THE OLD POSITION

This claim that bourgeois democracy was impossible in Europe was not confined to the SWP. In February 1944, a European Conference, held in France and attended by groups active in France, Belgium, Greece and Spain, also passed a document that endorsed the SWP's line regarding their perspectives for Europe.

Of course, one mistake, if corrected, is not a tragedy. However, a mistake, if not corrected, leads to another and another. Mistakes can then become a tendency.

And this is what happened. Cannon thus argued that it was only the first “stage” of the war that had ended, and that the second stage – A Third World War – was actively being prepared by the imperialists. He immediately began banging the drum about an imminent imperialist war against the Soviet Union.

This line of imminent war against the Soviet Union was then constantly repeated ever more loudly throughout this period.

This position also followed logically from their false view that the Soviet Union had emerged from the war weakened. In fact, Stalinism had emerged massively strengthened, both militarily and from the point of view of the authority of the Soviet Union over the broad masses across the world.

As Ted Grant wrote in March 1945: “*By far the greatest event of world significance is the emergence of Russia, for the first time in history, as the greatest military power in Europe and Asia.*”

But the SWP leaders went even further in their mistake. Given the so-called weakness of Stalinism, as they saw it, they argued that capitalism could be restored in the Soviet Union without even the need of military intervention, “simply through the combined economic, political and diplomatic pressure and the threats of American and British imperialism.” (Quoted in the RCP internal bulletin, 12 August 1946).

One ludicrous mistake simply led to another.

ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

These ‘leaders’ then denied any possibility that there would be an economic recovery in Europe.

ER Frank (Bert Cochran) opened the November 1946 12th SWP National Convention with the words:

“Under the present conditions, revival and reconstruction in Europe will take place at a very slow tempo; it will be very feeble in its achievements; it will not attain even the pre-war lev-



els; under American tutelage, the European economy is doomed to stagnation and decay.” (*Fourth International*, Vol. 8, No.1, January 1947)

In actual fact, an economic recovery was clearly beginning to take place.

In September 1947, Ernest Mandel, the International’s ‘chief economist’, argued in support of the Healy-led minority and against the RCP majority that “it is necessary to abandon right now any juggling with a boom that has not existed and that British capitalism will never experience again.”

Mandel then went on record:

“If the comrades of the RCP majority were to take their own definition seriously, they would logically conclude that we are confronting a ‘boom’ in ALL CAPITALIST EUROPE, because in all these countries production is ‘expanding’.” (E. Germain, *From the ABC to Current Reading: Boom, Revival or Crisis?* In the internal bulletin of the RCP, September 1947, emphasis in original.)

Such arguments were simply rehashing those of the Stalinists from the Third Period, who put forward the nonsense of ‘the final crisis of capitalism’.

An International Pre-Conference was organised in Paris in April 1946, where 15 groups were represented. This included Haston for the RCP majority, and Healy and Goffe for the minority.

The Draft IS resolution to the Pre-Conference, supported by the Healy Minority in Britain, stated:

“The revival of economic activity in capitalist countries weakened by the war, and in particular continental European countries will be characterised by an especially slow tempo which will keep their economy at levels bordering on stagnation and slump.”

In effect, their position was that there was a 1938 ceiling on production, but this was soon surpassed as production levels rose and rose.

The resolution repeated all the errors of its previous drafts and endorsed the position of the American SWP. It stressed that there would be no period of bourgeois democracy, only Bonapartism, a boom was ruled out, and that Russia in the near future could experience counter-revolution even by peaceful diplomatic means.

Only the RCP majority stood out against this nonsense. Rather than facing a crisis of overproduction, capitalism was in fact experiencing the opposite: a crisis of under-production. Therefore, a cyclical upswing was inevitable. In their amendment to the international Pre-Conference Resolution, the RCP explained:

“All the factors on a European and world scale indicate that the economic activity in Western Europe in the next period is not one of ‘stagnation and slump’ but one of revival and boom.”



All the RCP amendments on all these questions that attempted to correct the IS position were overwhelmingly rejected.

MILITARY DICTATORSHIPS

Inevitably, these false ideas and perspectives offered by the IS had a disorientating and damaging effect on the weak European sections of the International. The French section, for example, believing bourgeois democracy was untenable, refused to come out of illegality for a whole period following the arrival of Allied troops, fearing an exposure to repression. Pierre Frank, who had weeded himself back into the movement and became a leader of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI), was so taken by the theory that he claimed that not only France in 1946 was under Bonapartist military rule, but had been under such rule since 1934!

Frank, who also became a member of the IS, claimed that the idea of a “democratic counter-revolution” was an “expression devoid of content”.

In *Democracy or Bonapartism in Europe – A Reply to Pierre Frank* (August 1946) Ted Grant, answered him, stating that Frank “would then be hard put to explain what the Weimar Republic organised by the Social Democracy in Germany was.” He then went on to completely demolish Frank’s arguments point by point. “Events have demonstrated the correctness of this analysis. Instead of honestly facing up to an error in perspective, Frank flies in the face of reality and attempts to convert an error into virtue.”

Ted pointed out: “The statement of the IS made in 1940 was incorrect. *We made the same mistake*. Under the circumstances it was excusable. But to repeat in 1946 a mistake that was already clear by 1943 is inexcusable.” (Our emphasis).

This contribution of Ted Grant was one of the key works that drew a line between the method and approach of genuine Marxism and the petty-bourgeois eclectic outlook of the International Secretariat.

PIERRE FRANK

It is important to understand his political background and Trotsky’s attitude towards this individual. In late 1935, Molinier and Frank broke with the Trotskyist movement and established their so-called mass paper. In a letter of 3 December 1935, Trotsky wrote:

“There is no other political content in the attitude of Molinier and Frank. They are capitulating to the social-patriotic wave. All the rest is only phrases, worthless in the eyes of a serious Marxist...”

An open and honest break would be a hundred times better than ambiguous concessions to those who capitulate to the patriotic wave.” (*The Crisis of the French Section*, p.103)

Once again, in a letter dated 4 December 1935, Trotsky denounced Pierre Frank in no uncertain terms for an “abdication of principles”. He wrote:

“We have fought consistently against the Pierre Franks in Germany and



in Spain, against the sceptics, and against the adventurers who wanted to perform miracles (and broke their necks in the process).” (*The Crisis of the French Section*, pp.106-7)

Trotsky insisted on the expulsion of Pierre Frank, warning that he should not be re-admitted into the ranks of the Opposition. However, after the war, in Britain Frank supported Healy in the RCP, then returned to France. He rejoined his group, the PCI. He became a delegate to the 1946 conference and succeeded in being elected to the IS. In this way, he wormed his way back into the Fourth International, despite Trotsky’s serious objections.

PABLO’S DIPLOMATIC DEAL

The attitude of Cannon towards the newly-formed IS in Europe was to keep its nose out of American affairs. He wanted the Americans to be free to handle their own affairs without outside interference.

As Cannon himself explained later:

“Our relations with the leadership in Europe at that time were relations of closest collaboration and support. There was a general agreement between us. These were unknown men in our party. Nobody had ever heard of them. We helped to publicise the individual leaders, we commended them to our party members, and helped to build up their prestige. We did this, first because we had general agreement, and second because we realised they needed our support. They had yet to gain authority, not

only here but throughout the world. And the fact that the SWP supported them up and down the line greatly reinforced their position and helped them to do their great work.”

He then added: “We went so far as to soft-peddle a lot of our differences with them...” (Cannon, *Speeches to the Party*, p.73)

It was therefore no accident that Cannon now praised the newly-elected secretary of the International, Michel Pablo, as embodying this spirit. “He is a prolific writer, I judge”, stated Cannon. “But we don’t get any personal directives from him. He doesn’t write any personal letters criticising the SWP or praising it or telling it what to do.”

Michel Pablo (Raptis) was elected secretary of the reconstituted IS at the 1946 World Pre-Conference, with the backing of the SWP. Following this, Pablo was to be Cannon’s man in Europe. This was cemented following a trip to New York by Pablo in early 1947.

Pablo was accompanied by Sam Gordon, the SWP’s agent in Europe. There is no doubt about it that the reason was ‘diplomacy’, and it is no wonder that Pablo was tight-lipped about the trip. It served to bond relations between the IS in Paris and Cannon in New York. They now marched in lockstep, along a road that was to lead to complete disaster for the Fourth International.

In early February 1947, Cannon wrote to the SWP National Committee that



“the SWP will tolerate no more monkey business with discipline, and that unity manoeuvres [with the Workers Party of Shachtman] are firmly rejected and excluded for the future...” He then went on to describe the visit of Pablo:

“As you know, we have had a visit from Ted [Sam Gordon] and Gabe [Michel Pablo]. Together with them we have discussed and prepared some new moves designed to put an end to all ambiguity and bring all questions to a head and a definite settlement in connection with the world congress, now definitely scheduled for the fall...”

The information furnished us by Gabe [Pablo] and Ted [Gordon] made it clear that the genuine orthodox Marxist tendency is assured of a firm majority at the congress on all the disputed questions. Previous experience and discussion have prepared this victory of authentic Trotskyism in the world movement.”

Cannon then laid down the law in his usual terms:

“Those who accept the decisions of the Congress and oblige themselves to carry them out in practice, may remain in the organisation. Those who refuse to accept the decisions are to be automatically expelled. Any who may ‘accept’ the decisions with tongue in cheek and then proceed to violate them, shall be expelled.” (Cannon, *Writings 1945-47*, pp.323-324)

The “new moves” Cannon referred to were clearly measures to drive out any opposition (“monkey business”) and were part of the deal aimed internationally against the majority of the RCP. The tactic employed would be to split the RCP and recognise two sections in Britain, the majority led by Haston and Grant, and the minority led by Healy. The same methods were used against Demaziere and Craipeau, the opposition leaders in France.

The RCP leadership in Britain was shown to be correct on all the fundamental questions, which for the ‘leaders’ of the Fourth, steeped in prestige politics, proved intolerable. The British ‘problem’ needed to be urgently resolved. For this reason, from 1945 onwards, Cannon, Pablo, Mandel, Frank and their acolytes conspired to destroy the RCP, the most far-sighted by a long way of any of the sections of the Fourth International. It was a party, whose political line, could have successfully rearmed the movement and saved the Fourth International from destruction.

But this fact was precisely what the so-called leaders of the FI could not stomach. Cannon, in particular, hated to be proved wrong, which was the case on so many issues. In a letter to Healy, Cannon outlined his views:

“The whole Haston system had to be blown up before a genuine Trotskyist organisation could get started in England. The saddest part, which is to be regretted to this day, is that the recognition of this simple necessity was so



long delayed.” (Cannon to Healy, 5 September 1953, *ibid.*, p.262)

In his view, not only the RCP, but all opposition had to be “blown up”. This criminal plan to destroy the RCP now became even more pressing, given that the ‘leaders’ of the Fourth were making every mistake one could imagine – and a few more besides.

ENTRISM

Cannon was in regular contact with Healy in Britain. In Healy’s own words:

“The SWP members were especially helpful to us during the period between 1943 and 1949 in the struggle against the Haston clique. The group, which comprised a majority of the English Trotskyist organisation, was led essentially by Haston, his wife Mildred Haston and Ted Grant.” (Healy, ‘Problems of the Fourth International’, August 1966, in *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, vol.4, p.298)

Gerry Healy was thus a creature of Cannon’s, who stepped up his manoeuvres to create an ‘anti-leadership’ faction within the RCP, based solely on manufactured differences. At the 1945 RCP conference, Healy proposed the idea of abandoning the open party and entering the ILP. This idea was planted in Healy’s head by Pierre Frank.

However, with the expulsion of Trotskyists from the ILP, this position gained no support and was quietly dropped by Healy. Soon afterwards, in a light-minded manner, he hit on another idea, namely entry into the Labour Party instead. But the

conditions for entrism laid down by Trotsky were clearly absent. These were:

1. a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary crisis;
2. a ferment in one of the mass organisations;
3. the crystallisation of a left or centrist current within it; and
4. the possibility of a rapid crystallisation of a revolutionary tendency.

None of these conditions existed. But this didn’t deter Healy. He simply claimed that such conditions were about to quickly develop as Britain was facing an imminent cataclysmic slump. However, Healy’s perspectives, echoing the IS position, were completely false.

According to the RCP leaders, rather than a slump, there existed “a far more stable economic situation for British capitalism than the capitalists, reformists, or even the Trotskyists expected as the immediate outcome of the war...”

The Labour government, unlike that of 1929-31, was actually carrying out its reformist programme. This in turn strengthened the ideas of reformism, and as a result, meant there was no prospect of a mass left wing or ferment in the Labour Party for the foreseeable future. Following from this, the tactic to be pursued was not entrism in the Labour Party, but raising the banner of the open revolutionary party. Even Van Gelderen, the head of the RCP’s Labour Party fraction [a small group of RCP comrades doing fraction work in the



Labour Party, keeping an eye on developments there], was opposed to entry.

Nevertheless, the leaders of the RCP understood the difficulties ahead. “The inevitable crisis, however, will not be immediate. It will be delayed for a time”, explained the editorial in the theoretical magazine. “The orientation and strategy of the Revolutionary Communist Party is firmly based on the long-term perspective of crisis and decline but its eyes are also wide open to the immediate conjunctural upswing.” (Editorial Notes, *Workers’ International News*, Sept.-Oct. 1946)

For Healy, any issue, no matter what, was useful to attack – and hopefully undermine – the RCP leadership. Of course, in this fight, the International leadership (and behind them Cannon) backed Healy to the hilt.

As a result, the June 1946 International Executive Committee (IEC) meeting passed a resolution urging “the concentration of the greatest part of the forces of the RCP within the Labour Party, with the object of patiently building up an organised left wing”, and that “the RCP should weigh the practical possibilities of entry into this party”. There was only one vote against, namely the delegate of the RCP.

As can be seen, the argument had changed from *intervening* in the left wing, to actually *building up* the left wing. This was precisely because of the absence of a left wing in the Labour Party. Thus, the false idea was born that it was the task of the Trotskyists to build the Left.

To add insult to injury, Healy began to repeat the old slanders of Cannon, that the old WIL leaders were guilty of “insular national deviations” when they refused to join the RSL in 1938. The task was therefore to remove this “anti-internationalist” RCP leadership and create a new one more loyal and in line with the views of the International.

In banging the drum about entrism, with the full backing of the International, Healy managed to gain the support of about 25 percent of the RCP membership. But the factional lines were sharply drawn and Healy could not progress any further. In 1946 and 1947 he could muster only seven delegates for total immediate entry against twenty-eight for the majority.

As a result, in the summer of 1947, Healy’s faction proposed splitting the party to allow the minority to conduct its own entrism. The issue was then raised at the IEC in September, which, with the full backing of the IS, endorsed Healy’s proposal.

Within a month, a special RCP conference accepted the decision under protest. Cannon’s ‘new moves’ had succeeded.

It would, however, take Healy more than a year – in December 1948 – to launch a paper, *Socialist Outlook*, which advocated mild left-reformist policies in an attempt to ‘build the left’, a policy that would become known as ‘deep entrism’.

THE SECOND WORLD CONGRESS

The Second World Congress took place in Belgium in April 1948, with delegates from 19 countries. Once again, the lead-



ership put forward a fundamentally false perspective of slump, fascism and world war. According to the main resolution:

“In the absence of a revolutionary situation, the sharpened crisis of capitalism threatens to lead once more to fascism and to war which, this time, would imperil the existence and future of all mankind.” (*World Situation and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, Resolution Adopted by the Second Congress of the Fourth International – Paris, April 1948, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/fi/1938-1949/fi-2nd-congress/1948-congress03.htm>)

This perspective of atomic war and fascism was typical of Cannon, Pablo, Mandel and Frank. The vision of 1938, but even more apocalyptic, had to be maintained at all costs. The experience of the world war and its outcome was a closed book to these people.

Another huge mess these so-called great ‘theoreticians’ were making was in relation to Eastern Europe and the processes unfolding there.

Following the victories of the Red Army, the Stalinists established friendly regimes, called ‘People’s Democracies’, in what became known as the ‘buffer states’. They installed their puppets in firm control of these governments. While the Fourth International still defended the Soviet Union as a deformed workers’ state, the question was raised: what was the class character of the buffer states?

As early as March 1945, Ted Grant explained that in these areas, Stalin had retained capitalism. But given the instability, another variant was possible. He put forward the perspective that as things unfolded either the retention of capitalism in Eastern Europe would lead to the restoration of capitalism in Russia, “or the bureaucracy will be forced, against its own wishes and at the risk of antagonising its present imperialist allies, to nationalise industry in the permanently occupied countries, acting from above and, if possible, without the participation of the masses.”

The RCP leaders had rediscussed the question of the class nature of Russia following the war. They even considered the theory of bureaucratic collectivism, which had been put forward by Shachtman, according to which, the bureaucracy had been transformed into a new ruling class. However, after careful consideration, this was rejected. The Soviet Union still remained a monstrously deformed workers’ state.

Naturally, the ‘leadership’ of the Fourth failed to understand what was happening in Eastern Europe. First, they simply labelled them capitalist states. The RCP’s prognosis that these states could become deformed workers’ states was ridiculed by the IS.

Cannon, for years later kept distorting what the RCP comrades were saying. In a letter to Farrel Dobbs in early 1953, Cannon writes:

“Early in the postwar period the Haston gang became captivated by the



expansion of Stalinism and thought they saw in it ‘the wave of the future’.

They bestowed the honorific title of ‘workers’ states’ in every strip of territory the Red Army occupied, the moment this occupation took place.”

Cannon’s description of the RCP’s position was, as usual, a complete distortion. The RCP never argued that the entry of the Red Army into Eastern Europe transformed these occupied countries into workers’ states.

The RCP, on the contrary, argued that the ‘People’s Democracies’ still continued to be capitalist regimes. Stalin initially had no intention of expropriating the capitalists. He ordered the Communist Parties to enter coalition governments together with bourgeois parties. But in truth, these were coalitions not with the bourgeoisie, who had fled together with the Nazi occupiers. They were coalitions with the “shadows of the bourgeoisie”. Real power rested with the Stalinists and the Red Army. This uneasy alliance did not last long.

When the American imperialists started to introduce Marshall Aid to help establish the old order of things, and to give substance to the “shadows”, the Stalinists were forced to act. This meant leaning on the masses to carry through the expropriation of capitalism, but in a bureaucratic fashion and establishing regimes modeled on Moscow.

But the International poured cold water on such an occurrence. Instead, Mandel ironically asked Shachtman, “Does [he]

really think that the Stalinist bureaucracy has succeeded in overthrowing capitalism in half of our continent?” (*Fourth International*, February 1947)

The ironical tone of the question presupposes the answer that Mandel and the other leaders of the Fourth had already decided: such a conclusion was absolutely ruled out. The draft theses of the IS for the Second World Congress in April 1948 continued to underline the capitalist nature of the ‘buffer states’:

“The *capitalist* nature of the production relations of the ‘buffer-zone’ countries and the fundamental differences between their economy and that of Russia, even at the time of the NEP, can be clearly seen.” (“The Russian Question Today – Stalinism and the Fourth International’ – November-December 1947)

The theses then went on to box the International into a corner, ruling out any change in the class nature of these regimes:

“To deny the capitalist nature of these countries amounts to the acceptance, in no matter what form, of this Stalinist revisionist theory, it means seriously to consider the historic possibility of a destruction of capitalism by ‘terror from above’ without the revolutionary intervention of the masses.”

It went on:

“The fact that capitalism still exists in these countries side by side with exploitation by the Stalinist bureaucracy must fundamentally determine



our strategy. The capitalist nature of these countries imposes the necessity of the strictest revolutionary defeatism in war time.”

The crudeness of these lines clearly indicates the barrenness of the schematic and abstract approach that seeks to impose pre-conceived notions on reality, without any reference to the real state of affairs.

This stands in glaring contradiction to the dialectical method used by Trotsky when he analysed the conduct of the Stalinists in Poland and concluded correctly that it was indeed possible for the Stalinists to introduce new property relations, in line with the nationalised economy of the Soviet Union, but without any democratic participation by the working class.

As usual, in this resolution Mandel and Pablo attempted to cover their backside by stating that “It is not excluded that a certain relation of forces may necessitate a real structural assimilation of one or another country in the ‘buffer zone’” – thus managing to face different directions at the same time.

But just to confuse things still further, it adds that the trend, however, was definitely not in that direction, and that the private sector was not “oriented” that way, and the Stalinist bureaucracy was introducing “new and powerful obstacles” to such a possibility.

In complete contrast to this confused model, the British comrades offered a model of clarity and political consistency. Haston presented the RCP amendments to the

1948 World Congress, which were combined to produce the following composite:

“... the economies of these countries [the buffer states] are being brought into line with that of the Soviet Union (a) The basic overturn of capitalist property relations has already been, or is in the process of being, completed (b) The capitalist control of the government and the apparatus of the state has been, or is in the process of being, destroyed (c) This process of assimilation is the necessary and inevitable product of the class character of the Russian economy, and the preponderance of the Russian state is the dominant military force in the existing relations...” (“RCP Amendments to the Thesis on Russia and Eastern Europe.”, which were never published by the SWP).

As could have been expected, this was overwhelmingly rejected.

The Seventh Plenum of the IEC in April 1949, twelve months after the Prague coup, stubbornly refused to say capitalism had been abolished in Eastern Europe, but viewed the ‘buffer states’ as bourgeois states “of a special type”. In the inimitable words of Pierre Frank, “something like ‘degenerated bourgeois states’”.

Their hide-and-seek approach to the class nature of the buffer states was defined as “a unique type of hybrid transitional society in the process of transformation, with features that are as yet so fluid and lacking precision that it is extremely difficult to summarise its fundamental na-



ture in a concise formula.” (Resolution to the 7th Plenum)

Max Stein, in his report to the Political Committee of the SWP in July 1949 dealing with the IEC resolution on Eastern Europe, having been forced to recognise the nationalisations that had taken place, still dismissed the RCP’s views, saying he was “not dealing with the position of the British RCP which represents no new factor in the discussion, since its point of view was already presented to the World Congress and overwhelmingly rejected by it.”

He concluded by revealing the majority’s theoretical bankruptcy:

“Rather than jumping at conclusions as to the social character of the states in Eastern Europe it is far better to await further development.” (SWP, internal bulletin, vol.xi, no.5, October 1949)

However, a turning point came with the startling news of a break between Tito and Stalin. True to form, Mandel attempted to enhance his ‘theoretical’ standing by writing a long document about the class nature of Yugoslavia and the ‘buffer states’. This was published in October 1949 in an international internal bulletin.

He started by saying we must look at the facts, and then proceeded to ignore all the known facts and to reiterate the false position that the ‘buffer states’ were capitalist states, but in “transition”. These endless qualifications on top of qualifications are typical of Mandel’s dishonest method, amounting to continuous double bookkeeping.

Mandel indirectly attacked the RCP, by putting words in their mouths, and without using a single direct quote. By 1948, the RCP had reached the conclusion that these regimes were Stalinist deformed workers’ states, where capitalism had been eliminated, but only to be replaced by the rule of a bureaucratic elite.

The Stalinist bureaucracy had leaned on the workers to expropriate capitalism, but in their own bureaucratic manner, carefully removing any possibility of the kind of democratic workers’ state that was established by the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917.

In his haste to deny any progressive credentials to Stalinism, Mandel insisted that Stalinism was always and invariably counter-revolutionary in character, and therefore organically incapable of moving in such a direction:

“Obviously the hypothesis of the destruction of capitalism, not in Estonia or in Romania or even Poland, but in all Europe and the greater part of Asia, would transform our attitude towards Stalinism from top to bottom...”

The comrades adhering to the theory of the proletarian character of the buffer countries are far from envisaging this eventually, but it would be the logical conclusion of the road on which they have embarked and would oblige us to revise from top to bottom our historical appraisal of Stalinism. We would then have to examine the reasons why the proletariat has been incapable of destroying capitalism on such extensive territories



where the bureaucracy has successfully achieved this task.

We would also have to specify, as certain comrades of the RCP have already done [?], that the historical mission of the proletariat will not be the destruction of capitalism but rather that of building socialism, a task which the bureaucracy by its very nature cannot solve. We would then have to repudiate the entire Trotskyist argument against Stalinism since 1924, a line of argument based on the inevitable destruction of the USSR by imperialism in the event of an extremely prolonged postponement of the world revolution.” (*International Information Bulletin*, January 1950)

The first word in the sentence – “obviously” – is intended to anticipate the final result in advance. If something is obvious, there is no need to furnish any justification for it. If we define Stalinism as counter-revolutionary in its very essence, how then can it be capable of overthrowing capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe?

Trotsky explained many times that there can be exceptional circumstances in which even reformist politicians can be forced to go further than what they intended.

Whereas Stalin initially probably had no intention to eliminate capitalism in Eastern Europe, his hand was forced by the aggressive actions of US imperialism, which was attempting to use Marshall Aid as a lever to strengthen the bourgeois elements in the coalition governments in countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Stalin was forced to act in order to prevent this. It was not very difficult. As Trotsky said, in order to kill a tiger, a shotgun is necessary. But in order to kill a flea, one’s fingernails will suffice.

The weak and degenerate bourgeois of Eastern Europe was easily eliminated by a simple manoeuvre, carried out from the top, it is true, but with the active support of the workers, who were mobilized against the bourgeois parties and in support of the expropriation of capital.

Naturally, these methods have nothing in common with the classical model of proletarian revolution advocated by Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. That is based on the conscious movement of the working class itself from below.

What we have here is a Bonapartist caricature of a proletarian revolution that deliberately prevented the workers themselves from taking over the state and running it on democratic lines. Such a development would have been a mortal threat to Stalin and the Moscow bureaucracy. But the establishment of deformed workers’ states, established on the model of Russian Stalinism presented no threat at all. On the contrary, it served to strengthen Stalin and the bureaucracy.

The emergent regimes naturally had nothing in common with the democratic workers’ state established by Lenin and Trotsky in Russia in 1917. But it undoubtedly led to the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a nationalised planned economy. In that sense – and only that sense – it represented the carrying out of



one of the fundamental tasks of a proletarian revolution.

Despite Mandel's distortions, what had taken place in Eastern Europe was completely explainable using the Marxist method, as Ted Grant had done.

Mandel could not face up to the facts, because they were in flagrant contradiction to his preconceived ideas. For him, to recognise that capitalism had been overthrown in Eastern Europe was equivalent to admitting the possibility that the Stalinist could play a 'revolutionary' role.

It is elementary for Marxists that genuine socialism can only be achieved through the conscious movement of the working class. But the revolutions that were carried out in Eastern Europe were not genuine proletarian revolutions, but bureaucratic caricatures, carried out from the top by the Stalinist bureaucracy, although with the support of millions of workers who enthusiastically greeted the expropriation of the bosses.

Such methods could never lead to a healthy workers' state, and the RCP never claimed that they could. What emerged was a monstrous bureaucratic caricature of 'socialism' – in other words, precisely a deformed workers' state, as in Stalinist Russia.

Trotsky's dialectical method was a book sealed by seven seals, for Mandel and the other 'leaders' of the Fourth International. Proceeding from a series of abstract concepts, they were unable to understand the real concrete phenomena and processes that were unfolding before their very eyes.

Truth, as Lenin explained many times, is concrete. You have to start from the facts and not attempt to squeeze reality into a preconceived theory, as Trotsky pointed out:

“There is nothing more dangerous, however, than to throw out reality, for the sake of logical completeness, elements which today violate your scheme and tomorrow may wholly overturn it.” (*The Revolution Betrayed*, Chapter 9, Social Relations in the Soviet Union)

This was not a secondary matter, but dealt with the very touchstone of proletarian revolution and a fundamental question for Marxist theory, namely the class nature of the state. It was an acid test.

It is highly instructive to compare the International's position to the one adopted by the RCP in 1948, at the time of the Second World Congress in April.

Ted Grant explained that in relation to Eastern Europe “we came to the conclusion that what we had there was a form of proletarian Bonapartism”. Events in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 had confirmed the processes taking place. In an article published in the April edition of *Socialist Appeal*, about the 'Prague coup', Ted explained that the Stalinist-dominated government, leaning on the working class through 'action committees', had carried through measures of sweeping nationalisation of key sectors of the economy and that “the economic basis for a workers' state has been achieved”.



However, Ted explained that “for the state to act in the interests of the working class, the expropriation of the capitalists by itself is not enough. Democratic control of the state apparatus is an essential prerequisite for the march towards a communist society. All the great Marxists emphasised this.” He then went on to outline Lenin’s four points for a workers’ democracy, modelled on the Paris Commune and established by the Russian Revolution of 1917.

On this question, the ‘leaders’ of the Fourth were silent, refusing as usual to recognize what was taking place in front of their noses. For them, Czechoslovakia, and the rest of Eastern Europe, remained capitalist states.

Max Shachtman, who if nothing else clearly had a sense of humour, remarked:

“While the British hailed the (Prague) coup as a victory for the working class, the rest of the official Trotskyist press hailed it as a victory for the bourgeoisie which, with inexcusable perversity, was celebrating its triumph by jumping or being thrown out of high windows onto the pavement below.”

It would not be until July 1951, a full three years later, that Mandel and co. would come to reluctantly recognize that Eastern Europe had ceased to be capitalist.

STALIN-TITO CLASH

An even more astonishing example of this method was the scandalous position taken by these ‘leaders’ in regard to developments in Yugoslavia, which resulted in the Stalin-Tito clash in June 1948.

On 28 June 1948, a bombshell exploded with the publication of an extraordinary communiqué of the “Communist Information Bureau” (Cominform) – the organisation set up by Moscow to replace the Communist International, which had been officially dissolved in 1943.

The communiqué, issued on the initiative of the Russians, announced the expulsion of the Yugoslav Communist Party. This event rocked the entire world Stalinist movement.

The Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow was soon to attack Tito as a counter-revolutionary “nationalist”, “imperialist lackey” and “Trotskyist”. In reality Tito was neither a “Trotskyist” nor a “fascist agent”, as the Stalinists claimed. He had emerged as the leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party in the 1930s, after the old leadership had been murdered in Stalin’s purges. Tito, in fact, was himself responsible for the physical annihilation of the “Trotskyists”.

While the Red Army swept through Europe, it was Tito’s peasant partisan forces that defeated the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia. This had brought them into conflict with the deal that Stalin had made with Churchill at the Moscow Conference in 1944, to divide Yugoslavia equally between them.

As part of the agreement, Stalin had backed the establishment of a royalist-bourgeois government in Yugoslavia, in an attempt to curb Tito. He even refused the Yugoslavs arms and munitions. But faced with the rapid advance of Tito’s partisan forces, the bourgeoisie, who had collaborated



with the Nazi occupiers, had fled in terror together with the retreating German army. Having gained a victory through his own forces, Tito refused to submit to pressure from Stalin. He soon filled the vacuum left by the departure of the landlords and capitalists and, resting on the support of the workers and the peasants who formed the basis of his partisan army, eliminated capitalism and created a regime modelled on Stalinist Russia.

It was, in effect, a carbon copy of the process that occurred earlier in Poland and Czechoslovakia – but with a decisive difference. The liberation of Yugoslavia was not brought about by the Soviet Red Army, but by the Yugoslav Stalinists who commanded a powerful partisan army.

This gave Tito a firm base of national support, upon which he was able to carry on a policy independent from Moscow. However, the narrow national interests of the Russian and Yugoslav bureaucracies soon clashed. This came to a head when, in early 1948, the Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments proposed the formation of a Balkan Federation of ‘People’s Democracies’.

Stalin stamped on this proposal, but was now met with resistance. The Russian Stalinists sent GPU agents into the Yugoslav CP to bring it under control. But they were purged by Tito, who had a firm grip over the state apparatus, and a mass base, which he leaned upon. This was the basis for the Stalin-Tito split.

These events threw the leadership of the Fourth into complete confusion. Despite the decisions of the World Congress, Pab-

lo, as the head of the IS, regarded the clash as a golden opportunity to win over the Titoists to Trotskyism.

Overnight they abandoned their previous idea that Yugoslavia was a capitalist state, held only two months earlier, and rushed to support Tito.

Two days after the Cominform statement announcing the break, the IS wrote to the national sections of the Fourth, drawing their attention to the Tito affair as of “exceptional importance”.

The following day, the IS issued a remarkable ‘Open Letter’ to the Yugoslav Communist Party. “Now you are in a position to understand, in the light of the infamous campaign of which you are the victims, the real meaning of the Moscow Trials and of the whole Stalinist struggle against Trotskyism”, explained the statement. (The fact that the Yugoslav leaders enthusiastically participated in this campaign was not mentioned.) “We wish rather to take note of the promise in your resistance – the promise of victorious resistance by a revolutionary workers’ party against the most monstrous bureaucratic machine that has ever existed in the labour movement, the Kremlin machine.”

It then went on to urge the Yugoslav party, “Establish a regime of genuine workers’ democracy in your party and in your country!”, and concluded with the words: “Long Live the Yugoslav Socialist Revolution!”

Some two weeks later, on 13 July, the IS issued a second Open Letter, much longer,



but even more fawning, to “the Congress, Central Committee and Members of the Yugoslav Communist Party”.

This Open Letter urged the Yugoslav party to introduce workers’ democracy and return to Leninism at home and abroad. “We do not at all conceal that such a policy will encounter very great obstacles in your country and even in your own ranks. A complete re-education of your cadres in the spirit of genuine Leninism would be necessary”, stated the IS Letter. “We understand exactly the tremendous responsibility weighing upon you...”

The Open Letter ends with a request for a delegation of “our leadership to attend your Congress, in order to establish contact with the Yugoslav communist movement and to set up fraternal ties... *Yugoslav Communists, Let Us Unite Our Efforts for a New Leninist International! For the world victory of Communism!*” (Our emphasis)

Of course, this sycophantic appeal flew in the face of all their pronouncements about the class nature of ‘capitalist’ Eastern Europe. They had emphatically rejected the amendments of the RCP in April of that year, which recognised that the bourgeoisie in Eastern Europe had been or were being expropriated. The International ‘leadership’ maintained that counter-revolutionary Stalinism could not carry through a revolution, despite the fact that Trotsky had explained that under exceptional circumstances this was possible. Now, in a 180-degree turn, the IS had declared Yugoslavia under Tito a *relatively healthy*

workers’ state, a state without the bureaucratic deformations present in Russia!

At first the SWP in the US took a ‘plague on both your houses’ approach. However, when the Open Letters appeared from the IS, the SWP raised no objections. In fact, they published them in their press without any reservation or criticism.

RCP RESPONSE

The response of the British RCP to the Yugoslav crisis was completely different. First, they upheld the fundamental principles of Trotskyism, including the defence of the right of the Yugoslavs to self-determination, which the SWP refused to recognise.

“It is clear that any Leninist must support the right of any small country to national liberation and freedom if it so desires”, wrote Ted Grant and Jock Haston. They continued:

“All socialists will give critical support to the movement in Yugoslavia to federate with Bulgaria and to gain freedom from direct Moscow domination. At the same time, the workers in Yugoslavia and these countries will fight for the installation of genuine workers’ democracy, of the control of the administration of the state and of industry as in the days of Lenin and Trotsky in Russia. This is impossible under the present Tito regime.” (*Socialist Appeal*, July 1948)

Again, in their pamphlet *Behind the Stalin-Tito Clash*, Ted and Jock argued that the conflict “must be the means of educating the working class as to the fundamental



differences in method between Stalinism and Leninism”. On this basis, they wrote:

“This crack in the international Stalinist front can mark a stage in the long struggle of Trotsky and the Fourth International to expose Stalinism [...] It will mark a stage in the advance towards the building of a genuine Communist International, the Fourth International, which can lead to the establishment of a world system of freely federated Communist republics.”

But when the leaders of the RCP saw the Open Letters of the IS to the Yugoslavs, they were horrified. Unlike the American SWP, the RCP was not prepared to tolerate this capitulation to Stalinism and came out openly against it. On behalf of the Central Committee, Jock Haston wrote a letter of protest to the International, reiterating their criticisms and rejecting the orientation of the Open Letters:

“The Yugoslav-Cominform dispute offers the Fourth International great opportunities to expose to rank-and-file Stalinist militants the bureaucratic methods of Stalinism. However, our approach to this major event must be a principled one. We cannot lend credence, by silence on aspects of YCP [Yugoslav Communist Party] policy and regime, to any impression that Tito or the leaders of the YCP are Trotskyist, and that great obstacles do not separate them from Trotskyism. Our exposure of the bureaucratic manner of the expulsion of the

YCP must not mean that we become lawyers for the YCP leadership, or create even the least illusion that they do not still remain, despite the break with Stalin, *Stalinists in method and training*.

[...]

The Letters appear to be based on the perspective that the leaders of the YCP can be won over to the Fourth International. Under the stress of events, strange transformations of individuals have taken place, but it is exceedingly unlikely, to say the least, that Tito and other leaders of the YCP can again become Bolshevik-Leninists. Tremendous obstacles stand in the way of that eventuality: past traditions and training in Stalinism, and the fact that they themselves rest on a Stalinist bureaucratic regime in Yugoslavia. The letters failed to point out the nature of these obstacles, fail to underline that for the leadership of the YCP to become communists, it is necessary for them not only to break with Stalinism, but to repudiate *their own past*, their present Stalinist methods, and to openly recognise that they themselves bear a responsibility for the building of the machine now being used to crush them. Here it is not a question of communists facing a ‘terrible dilemma’, with an ‘enormous responsibility’ weighing on them, to whom we offer modest advice: it is a question of Stalinist bureaucrats *becoming* communists.”



The RCP letter continued:

“As they stand, however, by their silence on fundamental aspects of the regime in Yugoslavia and YCP policy, the Letters strike an opportunist note.

[...]

The IS Letters analyse the dispute solely on the plane of the ‘interference’ of the CPSU leaders, as if it were here solely a question of that leadership seeking to impose its will without consideration for the ‘traditions, the experience and the feelings’ of militants. But the dispute is not simply one of a struggle of a Communist Party for independence from the decrees of Moscow. It is a struggle of a section of the bureaucratic apparatus for such independence. The stand of Tito represents, it is true, on the one hand the pressure of the masses against the exactions of the Russian bureaucracy, against the ‘organic unity’ demanded by Moscow, discontent at the standards of the Russian specialists, pressure of the peasantry against too rapid collectivisation. But on the other hand, there is the desire of the Yugoslav leaders to maintain an independent bureaucratic position and further aspirations of their own.

[...]

Not only in respect to Yugoslavia, but also in respect to other countries, the Open Letter gives the entirely false impression that it is the Russian leadership which is *solely* responsi-

ble... [This] can create illusions that the leaders of the national Stalinist parties could be good revolutionists, if only Moscow would let them... These leaders actively participate in the preparation of the crimes. So also for Tito, it was not a matter of having been ‘forced’ to carry out the wishes of Moscow in the past.

We cannot fail to comment here that your uncritical letter to the Yugoslav Communist Party precisely lends weight to the point of view that Tito is an ‘unconscious Trotskyist’.”

The RCP letter went on to highlight the apparent turn around over the class nature of the Yugoslav and ‘buffer’ countries that had been adopted by the World Congress in April 1948. It was clear that the position of the RCP, rejected in April, was now being confirmed as having been correct only a few months later.

“The World Congress majority adopted a position that the buffer countries, including Yugoslavia, were *capitalist* countries. It rejected the resolution of the RCP that these economies were being brought into line with that of the Soviet Union and could not be characterised as capitalist. The amendment of the British Party to the section ‘The USSR and Stalinism’ was defeated. But it is evident from these letters that the IS has been forced by events to proceed from the standpoint of the British party, *that the productive and political relations in*



Yugoslavia are basically identical with those of the Soviet Union.

If indeed there exists in Yugoslavia a capitalist state, then the IS Letters can only be characterized as outright opportunist. For the IS does not pose the tasks in Yugoslavia which would follow if bourgeois relations existed there as the dominant form. The Letters are based on conclusions which can only flow from the premise that the basic overturn of capitalism and landlordism has taken place.” (Emphasis in original)

In his *Reply to David James* (Spring 1949), Ted went on to state:

“The only difference between the regimes of Stalin and Tito is that the latter is still in its early stages. There is a remarkable similarity in the first upsurge of enthusiasm in Russia, when the bureaucracy introduced the First Five-Year Plan, and the enthusiasm in Yugoslavia today.

[...]

Already the first ‘sabotage’ trials have taken place where Tito puts responsibility for any deficiencies in the plan, on the shoulders of his opponents. Similarly, we have the pattern of the Russian ‘confession’ trials on a smaller scale. The familiar outlines of the Stalinist police state are clear to see. The differences are superficial, the fundamental traits the same.”

However, such damning criticism was dismissed out of hand by the ‘leaders’ of the

Fourth International. But by this time, they saw no reason to reply. By that point they had already criminally split the RCP and Healy’s minority were in practice being recognised as the official section in Britain.

The only other section of the International which raised any objections was the French section, but its criticism was very weak and timid: “We do not at all reproach the IS for appealing to the Yugoslav CP and its CC. This step is appropriate given the relations between the masses and the CP.” However, the French leadership was upset with its tone. “But we do object to these letters for idealising Tito and the Yugoslav CP”. They nevertheless fell quickly into line and made it clear that they were abiding by international discipline.

During 1949 and 1950, the IS became ever more infatuated with the idea that Tito’s Yugoslavia was a ‘relatively healthy’ workers’ state. An IEC resolution in that year went so far as to announce that “the dynamics of the Yugoslav revolution confirms the theory of the permanent revolution on all points”, and that “in Yugoslavia ... Stalinism no longer exists today as an effective factor in the workers’ movement...”

As regards the rest of Eastern Europe, while maintaining they were capitalist, they developed a dishonest, muddled theory that these states were “on the road of structural assimilation with the USSR”. But added that they “constitute, today, the pattern of a hybrid and transitory society in full transformation, with outlines still unclear and imprecise, from which it is extremely difficult to summarise their fun-



damental character in a concise formula'. This extremely vague formulation simply allowed them to gloss over the reality, but gave them a convenient escape route for the future.

Needless to say, the RCP's amendments at the Second World Congress were never published by the SWP, while their positions were attacked and distorted.

The fact remains that it was the RCP who held a clear position, which allowed Grant and Haston to predict that "far from attacking the real crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy, it appears that Tito will try to arrive at some compromise". This is exactly what happened.

WORK BRIGADES

In 1950, the International developed the idea of organising work brigades to go to Yugoslavia. The French section, the International Communist Party (PCI), which, as we have seen, originally had reservations about the tone adopted by the IS 'Open Letter', had now, under the Bleibtreu-Lambert leadership, become the greatest fan club for the Yugoslav Stalinists.

With Lambert's enthusiastic support, the PCI sent youth and trade union brigades to help 'build socialism' in Yugoslavia. In January 1950, the report on the PCI's Sixth Congress stated "that it is false to speak of a Yugoslav bureaucratic caste of the same nature as the Russian bureaucracy" and "that it false to accept the idea that the YCP has capitulated or is on the way towards capitulation to imperialism" (*La Verité*, 246, Jan 1950, Report on the

defence of Yugoslavia <https://cermtri.com/system/files/Adherents/no246.pdf>).

The Congress resolution declared that the Yugoslav CP represented a "return to Leninism on a series of important strategic questions". It defined the YCP as "left-centrism in the process of evolving", with factors "which objectively push the YCP onto the road of the revolutionary programme" (Hands off the Yugoslav revolution, resolution of the VI congress of the PCI, *La Verité* No. 247, 1st half of February, 1950 <https://cermtri.com/system/files/Adherents/no247.pdf>).

The PCI urged its supporters to tune into broadcasts of Radio Belgrade. Under the headline, 'The Magnificent Election Campaign of the YCP', Gerard Bloch declared:

"The YCP and the Fourth International are hated for the same reason: because they express the greatest force of our epoch, the force of the proletarian revolution, the invincible strength of the working people of all countries." (*La magnifique campagne électorale du PCY*, *La Verité* No.251, first half of April 1950)

On May Day 1950, a French delegation visited Belgrade, which included the PCI leader, Lambert, who exuded admiration for the Tito regime:

"I believe that I saw in Yugoslavia a dictatorship of the proletariat, led by a party which passionately seeks to combat bureaucracy and impose workers' democracy."



At the same time, he proudly reported on the slogans that were carried in the demonstration: “Tito, Central Committee, Party, Yugoslav Peoples”, and “Tito Is With Us, We Are with Tito”. (Pierre Lambert, ‘1er Mai a Belgrade’, *La Verite* No.254, second half of May 1950)

Lambert, as responsible for the trade union work commission of the PCI, established a trade union bulletin called *L’Unité*, together with trade unionists opposed to the French Communist Party, which received funding from the Yugoslav embassy.

They organised work brigades called ‘Jean Jaurès Brigades’. The PCI newspaper, *La Verité*, headlined a report of one delegation:

“Those Who Have Seen the Truth in Yugoslavia Say It: YES, This Is a State Where Socialism Is Being Built, This Is the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”

Rebutting Stalinist allegations about Yugoslavia being a ‘police state’, the article declared:

“Unlike what happens in the USSR, it is the working class itself which exercises power in Yugoslavia [...] This state is a WORKERS’ STATE, resolutely engaged on the road of SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY.” (‘Ceux qui ont vu la vérité en Yougoslavie la dissent: OUI c’est un état où se construit le socialisme, c’est la dictature du prolétariat’, *La Verite* No.258, first half of October 1950)

Healy was also busy supporting Tito, organising a “John MacLean Youth Work

Brigade” from the Labour League of Youth to go to Yugoslavia.

Not to be outdone, Cannon waded in with his praise for the regime. He sent a telegram to the Central Committee of the Yugoslav CP hailing its May Day manifesto:

“Workers everywhere will acclaim your appeal to defend Yugoslavia and restore revolutionary movement to Leninism as opposed to Stalinism and Social Democracy.” (‘Yugoslav May Day Manifesto Hailed by SWP Leader’, *The Militant*, 8 May 1950)

Two months later, the SWP’s newspaper, *The Militant*, was glorifying Tito with its headline, “Tito Denounces Bureaucracy as Foe of Socialism”, and his attack on Stalin as “a great milestone in the development of the international working-class and socialist movement.” (‘Tito’s June 27 Speech’, *The Militant*, 10 July 1950)

In the Eighth Plenum of the IEC in April 1950, Mandel boldly declared that Yugoslavia is now “a non-degenerated workers’ state”.

When the Tito regime openly capitulated to imperialism, in July 1950, by abstaining on the UN military intervention against the North in the Korean War, the PCI paper in December 1950 expressed disappointment and disillusionment:

“All this is extremely painful for the revolutionary friends of Yugoslavia who have hoped that its leaders would really keep their promises to consistently defend Marxism-Leninism against Stalinist revisionism.”



(‘La Yougoslavie sur la voie glissante’, *La Vérité* No. 263, second half of December 1950)

But all the ‘leaders’ of the Fourth, without exception, capitulated to Tito-Stalinism: Cannon, Mandel, Pablo, Frank, Maitan, Healy, etc. Their International had become, in the words of Ted Grant, “an ex-culpatory tourist agency for Yugoslavia”.

In 1953, when Cannon, Healy and Lambert accused Pablo of being pro-Stalinist, they tried to hide the fact they had been big fans of Stalinism in the years before. Healy’s seven-volume documentary history of the Fourth International only begins in 1952-3. The earlier period is simply swept under the carpet.

CHINESE REVOLUTION

A further mess was being made in relation to China and the Chinese Revolution of 1949.

Incapable of thinking independently, the IS stuck to the idea that Mao would inevitably capitulate to Chiang Kai-Shek. As a result, the Chinese Trotskyists were thoroughly confused, when events turned out differently.

The Stalinist-led peasant armies crushed those of Chiang Kai-Shek and overthrew capitalism. Inspired by Stalinist Russia, they constructed a proletarian bonapartist regime. Ted Grant alone understood what was happening and predicted in advance what was to take place, even before Mao himself realised it.

The refusal of the IS to recognise reality had become so utterly ridiculous. There was one international meeting where Cannon and the others, including a Chinese comrade, were arguing that Mao’s armies would never cross the Yangtze river and defeat Chiang’s forces. However, by the end of the meeting, the Red Army had in fact crossed the Yangtze River and smashed Chiang Kai-Shek’s forces. Shachtman had his supporters helpless with laughter when he joked about Cannon’s perspectives for China. “Yes, Mao wants to capitulate to Chiang Kai-Shek”, he quipped. “The only problem is Mao can’t catch up with him!”

Chiang Kai-Shek’s armies simply melted away under the impact of Mao’s revolutionary agrarian programme and propaganda of ‘land to the tillers’. However, he ruthlessly suppressed any independent movement of the proletariat in the towns.

Ted Grant proclaimed in advance that the development of the Chinese Revolution was “the greatest event in human history”, after the Russian Revolution.

TED’S PREDICTION

When Mao came to power in October 1949, his perspective was that there would need to be 100 years of capitalism in China before the possibility of socialism was posed. However, Ted’s analysis was so advanced that he predicted what would happen before even Mao thought of it.

The events in China were a puzzle to the ‘leaders’ of the Fourth. They took Trotsky’s pre-war tentative view that if the Maoist armies were victorious against Chiang Kai-



Shek, the tops of the Red Army would betray its peasant base. And in the cities, given the passivity of the workers, the Red Army tops would fuse with the bourgeoisie, leading to capitalism. This did not happen as the road to capitalist development in China was blocked. The bourgeoisie under the regime of Chiang Kai-Shek revealed its complete bankruptcy, incapable of solving the agrarian question or ridding the country of imperialist domination.

In 1950, Ted explained the processes taking place which led to the rise of bureaucratically deformed workers' states:

"The fact that the revolution in China and Yugoslavia could be developed in a distorted and debased character is due to the world factors of:

- a. The crisis of world capitalism.
- b. The existence of a strong, deformed workers' state adjacent to these countries and powerfully influencing the workers' movement.
- c. The weakness of the Marxist current of the Fourth International.

These factors have resulted in an unparalleled development, which could not have been foreseen by any of the Marxist teachers: the extension of Stalinism as a social phenomenon over half [of] Europe, over the Chinese sub-continent and with the possibility of spreading over the whole of Asia.

This poses new theoretical problems to be worked out by the Marxist

movement. Under conditions of isolation and paucity of forces, new historical factors could not but result in a theoretical crisis of the movement, posing the problem of its very existence and survival." (Grant, 'Open Letter to the BSFI', Sept-Oct 1950)

The problem of "its very existence and survival" was certainly posed very sharply. Mistake after mistake, and their inability to learn from their mistakes, had utterly discredited the International.

As late as 1954, the SWP were still talking about China as capitalist. It was only the following year, in 1955, that they characterised China as a deformed workers' state.

Ted draws all the threads together in his document "Stalinism in the Postwar World", written in June 1951:

"For Marxism neither pessimism nor spurious optimism can play a role in determining the analysis of events. The first necessity is to understand the meaning of the conjuncture of historical forces leading to the present world situation."

He also predicted that the creation of a deformed workers' state in China would, as with Tito, lead to a serious clash with the Russian bureaucracy. In other words, he anticipated the future Sino-Soviet split.

All this was a closed book for Cannon, Mandel, Pablo, Frank, and Co., who completely failed to understand what was going on. According to them, there was a relatively healthy workers' state in Yugoslavia, capitalist states in the rest of Europe, and a



deformed workers' state in Russia. As Ted explained, "This position was incoherent even from the standpoint of formal logic, let alone Marxism".

RCP DESTROYED

The constant gyrations and blunders of the 'leaders' of the Fourth not only led to the destruction of the Fourth International, but also was instrumental in destroying the RCP, the most successful section of the International.

Although the movement faced objective difficulties, given the boom and the strengthening of Stalinism, a correct policy and perspective could have preserved the cadres. However, the manoeuvres and false policies of the ruling clique served to disorient and demoralise the cadres.

This demoralisation affected some of the leading comrades of the RCP, particularly Jock Haston. The leaders of the International proposed dissolving the RCP into the Labour Party – a policy of deep entrism. And although he knew very well that the conditions laid down for entrism by Trotsky were entirely absent, Haston, who was desperate to remain inside the ranks of the International, suggested that this proposal be accepted.

Ted and other party leaders were opposed to this, but in an attempt to keep the leadership together, they eventually went along with it. But when they tried to enter into discussions with the international leadership, they were abruptly told: don't talk to us – talk to our representative in Britain – Gerry Healy. In fact, they were instructed

to fuse with Healy's group or find themselves outside of the International.

The conditions imposed by Healy were quite outrageous: there was to be no discussion of any differences for six months after which there would be a conference. This was supposedly to facilitate unification. In reality, it was a cynical manoeuvre on Healy's part.

Healy was determined to guarantee himself a majority at the conference. Up to this point, he had never yet succeeded in winning a majority in the RCP. Now he had the means of solving this problem. Taking advantage of the situation and using the most arbitrary and bureaucratic methods, Healy immediately proceeded to expel opposition elements.

With Healy now in complete control of the organisation, no opposition was tolerated. This was the revenge he had been waiting for ten years to inflict.

When Haston saw what was happening, and by now completely demoralised, he resigned in disgust. Not satisfied with this, Healy demanded he be formally expelled.

He announced to the Political Bureau early in March 1950 that Haston should be expelled for his "renegacy", arguing that "The man is an incorrigible opportunist."

Haston's resignation placed Ted in an impossible position. But he could see that the whole business was a disgusting farce, and so he abstained. Healy then went on to expel Tony Cliff, in reality due to his ideas and in order to prevent his document from being discussed at the conference. When



Ted refused to endorse Cliff's expulsion, he was also expelled.

On the basis of such blatant manoeuvres, and a systematic purge, Healy gained his 'majority'.

These methods were completely alien to the Trotskyist movement. They were directly taken from the copybook of Zinovievism, which is only one step removed from Stalinism.

This had nothing in common with the traditions of Bolshevism, clean democratic traditions, which were always upheld by the RCP. This is how Trotsky explained that internal disputes should be handled:

"First of all, it is important to observe very strictly the statutes of the organisation – regular meetings of the rank and file, discussions before conventions, regular conventions and the right of the minority to express its opinion (there should be a comradely attitude and no threats of expulsion). You know that was never, never done in the old [Russian] party. Expulsion of a comrade was a tragic event, and was done only for moral reasons and not because of a critical attitude."

(From "Results of the Entry and Next Tasks", 6 October 1937, in "Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-37]", page 486)

Ted and Jock Haston strongly disagreed with Tony Cliff's revisionist theory of state capitalism, but they answered him politically, in a way that would raise the level of the cadres. It never occurred to them to expel him for his wrong views.

These rotten Zinovievist methods had now become the norm within the so-called Fourth International, whose leaders attempted to resolve political differences by administrative measures, pressure and bullying.

Following Ted's expulsion from Healy's organisation, the 'Club', as it was called, Ted was then formally expelled from the Fourth International at its Third Congress in August 1951 on a motion presented by Mandel.

According to the report in the International Information Bulletin (December 1951):

"The expulsion of Haston, regular member of the IEC and of Grant, alternate member, both representing the former majority of the RCP and embodying that tendency of British Trotskyism which obstinately refused to become integrated in the International and to assimilate the new course of Trotskyism."

It continued: "it represents a typical example of the rapid degeneration of any tendency which seeks its salvation in a national particularism outside of the broad paths of development of the International..."

Its open display of cynicism went so far as to say:

"His [Haston's] expulsion from the IEC at the eighth Plenum after he had left the organisation and committed acts of open treachery terminated a long political struggle in which no one can deny the patient and flexible attitude of the International leader-



ship, which did everything possible to really integrate the Haston tendency in the International.”

Healy and Cannon, together with the rest of them, had finally got their way. In the end, the RCP, together with the whole of the Fourth International of Trotsky, was destroyed. This meant that genuine Trotskyism had been defeated and Zinovievism reigned victorious within the organisation.

AN UNPRINCIPLED SPLIT

Ted Grant pointed out many times that the only authority that a genuine Leninist leadership can claim is a moral and political authority. Take that away, and all that is left is a corrupt bureaucratic regime in which the leaders claim for themselves a spurious prestige

Leaders who are equipped with the necessary ideological preparation and who are steeped in the methods of dialectical materialism are never afraid to answer any political differences or criticisms.

But leaders who do not have sufficient level to answer their critics in the language of facts, figures and arguments will always tend to rely on administrative measures to eliminate unwanted internal problems. Such methods are a sure path to the destruction of the organisation.

Lacking the necessary political and moral authority, the leaders of the Fourth used Zinovievite methods to impose their policy. Such methods inevitably only produce political demoralisation, crises and unprincipled splits.

This – together with a consistently incorrect political line – is what guaranteed the final destruction of the Fourth International.

The RCP was the only serious obstacle in the path of the complete degeneration of the Fourth International.

With the destruction of the RCP, the road was now open for Pablo, Mandel and Frank to ride roughshod over the sections of the International. What they lacked was political and moral authority, which was accurately reflected in their consistently incorrect perspective and policy.

In 1951, at the Third World Congress, Pablo and the IS swung over from their previous position of a Stalinism weakened from the war to one where the perspective was of an immediate atomic war waged by imperialism on the Soviet Union – a Third World War that would lead to revolution.

This war was regarded as part of the international class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, with the United States at the head of the bourgeois camp, and the Soviet Union, with its Stalinist leadership – however reluctantly – leading the camp of the international proletariat. This perspective, in the minds of these people, was made more real by the Korean War which was still going on. According to Pablo:

“The two conceptions of ‘Revolution’ and of ‘War’, far from being in opposition or being differentiated as two significantly different stages of development so interlinked as to be almost indistinguishable... In their stead it



is the conception of ‘Revolution-War’ or ‘War-Revolution’ which is emerging, and upon which the perspectives and orientation of revolutionary Marxists in our epoch should rest.” (‘Where Are We Going?’, Michel Pablo, July 1951)

As regards a victorious outcome, this “transformation will probably take an entire historical period of several centuries and will in the meantime be filled with forms and regimes transitional between capitalism and socialism and necessarily deviating from ‘pure’ forms and norms”.

In other words, his perspective was one of “centuries of deformed workers’ states”, with the Trotskyists as a loyal opposition within these states.

Given the timescale and the ferment in the mass organisations provoked by this ‘War-Revolution’, the Trotskyists, according to Pablo, should now enter the mass organisations, Stalinist or Social-Democratic, to prevent their isolation. This was a policy of *entrism sui generis* – entrism “of a special kind”. This would be a policy of long-term ‘deep entrism’ until the “coming world showdown” had been resolved in the victories of deformed workers’ states.

Pablo declared that Stalinism and petty-bourgeois nationalism could play a progressive role in the transition from capitalism to socialism. This was precisely what the leaders of the Fourth had indignantly accused the RCP of arguing – although, in fact, the RCP never had such a position.

The Ninth Plenum of the IEC in November 1950, the Third World Congress in the summer of 1951, and then the IEC Plenum in February 1952, all endorsed Pablo’s analysis, including this new entrism strategy arising from the looming world war.

This led the POR, – the Bolivian section of the Fourth International – to support the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR), which led the proletariat to defeat in the 1952 Bolivian Revolution (see The 1952 Bolivian Revolution).

The Resolution on Bolivia for the 12th Plenum of the IEC (December 1952) stated that the POR had acted in a correct way and openly backed “the critical support granted to the MNR”. (International Information Bulletin, Jan 1953, p 24)

The majority of the French section came out in opposition to some aspects of Pablo’s new line and Bleitbreu-Favre wrote a document in opposition called ‘Where is Pablo going?’. While Pablo had adopted a line of adaptation to the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy, Favre was still clinging to the previous position of illusions in the Stalinists in Yugoslavia and the Chinese Communist Party. His argument was:

“The thing that defines a workers’ party as Stalinist – as opposed to a revolutionary party or a social-democratic party (linked to the bourgeoisie) or any sort of a centrist party – is neither a Stalinist ideology (which doesn’t exist), nor bureaucratic methods (which exist in all kinds of parties), but rather its total and mechanical subordination to the Kremlin. When



for one reason or another this subordination ceases to exist, that party ceases to be Stalinist and expresses interests that are different from those of the bureaucratic caste in the USSR. This is what happened (because of the revolutionary action on the part of the masses) in Yugoslavia well before the break in relations; the break only made it official. This is what has already happened in China, and will inevitably be reflected by a break in relations no matter what course the Chinese Revolution takes.”

This was the basis of the opposition to Pablo on the part of the PCI majority. Predictably, Pablo used bureaucratic means to overcome this opposition. First, he refused to put the French majority document to the vote at the 1951 World Congress. Then he strong-armed the French majority to agree to a commission to decide on the details of the tactics in France. This was an uneasy compromise.

In January 1952, the IS instructed the French section to implement entry into the French Communist Party. This meant abandoning the joint trade union work Lambert had been carrying in *L'Unité* with anti-communist elements (now part of the Force Ouvrière trade union federation), and joining the CGT. The majority of the CC voted against. Pablo then stepped in and bureaucratically suspended all 16 CC members who had voted against! This decision was reversed by the IEC a month later.

However, by mid-1952, with the national conference looming, the French section's

pro-Pablo minority raided the PCI headquarters and took equipment. They were promptly expelled by the majority, which resulted in two organisations with the same name and paper.

At the November 1952 IEC meeting the French majority, led by Lambert and Bleibtreu-Favre, were defeated and finally expelled from the International by the IS in January 1953. This action and the general political line were supported by an overwhelming majority, including by the American SWP and the Healy group, who were still arch-Pabloites.

Before this, Daniel Renard, a member of the French section, had written to Cannon for support against the pro-Stalinist line of Pablo. In May 1952, Cannon replied to Renard repudiating any suggestion of a pro-Stalinist tendency in the International:

“We do not see such a tendency in the International leadership of the Fourth International nor any sign nor symptom of it.

We judge the policy of the international leadership by the line it elaborates in official documents; in the recent period by the documents of the Third World Congress and the Tenth Plenum. We do not see any revisionism there. We consider these documents to be completely Trotskyist...

It is the unanimous opinion of the leading people of the SWP that the authors of these documents have rendered a great service to the movement for which they deserve appre-



ciation and comradely support, not distrust and denigration.” (“Letters exchanged between Daniel Renard and James P. Cannon’, February 16 and May 9, 1952)

The above statements, it is absolutely clear that *all* of them were ‘Pabloites’ at this time. They were all politically singing exactly the same song. It is sufficient to recall that the resolutions of the Third World Congress in 1951 were drafted by the Pabloite IS and agreed at that congress.

Cannon supported Pablo unconditionally. “The resolution as I understand it is an attempt to recognise and face the new reality in the world and to draw the necessary conclusions for our strategy and tactics. I agree with the conclusions which are drawn”, he stated. (Cannon, *Speeches to the Party*, p.141)

Cannon, in particular, saw these resolutions as endorsing his ‘American Theses’. He underlined this in a letter to Dan Roberts:

“In reality the events analysed in the Third Congress documents powerfully reinforce the American Theses, and give them more actuality. The world trend towards revolution is now irreversible, and America will not escape its pull.” (Cannon, *Speeches to the Party*, p.271)

When Cannon read Pablo’s pamphlet, *The Coming World Showdown*, with its perspective of world war developing into war-revolution, he stated: “I find myself in complete agreement with Pablo’s pamphlet.”

The 1952-3 split, when it came, was therefore nothing to do with political differences, as there was no disagreement. When Pablo presented a draft to the IS entitled *The Rise and Fall of Stalinism* as the basis for discussion at the forthcoming Fourth World Congress, Healy agreed that it be circulated to all sections in the name of the IS, with only a few minor criticisms.

For his part, Healy had been a close ally of Pablo over these years. “For the past few years I have been extremely close to him and have grown to like him considerably”, he wrote to Cannon in May 1953. “He has done a remarkable job and right now he needs our help.” (“Letter from G. Healy to James P. Cannon, May 27 1953’, *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, vol.1, pp.112 & 114)

The split instead had everything to do with the relations of Pablo and the SWP leaders, who now saw each other as rivals. While Cannon endorsed Pablo’s politics, he could never tolerate Pablo’s interference in the SWP. In particular, he accused Pablo of interfering in their ‘affairs’, with the emergence of a minority faction in opposition to the SWP leadership, led by Bert Cochran, which, according to them, was “instigated by Paris”.

As a result, Cannon launched an attack on ‘Paris’, a foreign body that was attempting to interfere in the American party and encourage its internal dissidents. Cannon was soon working to remove Pablo “and his spineless lackeys”. With his characteristic aggression, he wrote: “The revolutionary task is not to ‘live with’ this tendency... but to blow it up.”



He added:

“As I visualise the next stage of our strategy, it should proceed from the uncompromising determination to annihilate Pabloism politically and organisationally.”

So, there you have it: From total agreement and unconditional support for Pabloism in all its manifestations, to “the uncompromising determination” to annihilate it and drive it out of the organisation! And this 180° somersault was carried out effortlessly, without blinking an eyelid and without any explanation, in the space of just a few months.

When it came, the split was music to Healy’s ears. There would now be a new division of labour, where Healy would become Cannon’s man in Europe, allowed to get on with his own thing. He was also joined by the French PCI led by Bleibtreu-Favre and Lambert, who all came together in the formation of the so-called ‘International Committee’ of the Fourth International.

In the meantime, Healy was conducting a policy of deep entrisism in Britain centred around *Socialist Outlook*, in collaboration with a number of left reformists. In 1954, the Labour NEC proscribed their paper. Without a paper, the Healyites began opportunistically to sell and contribute to the *Tribune*, a reformist journal edited by Michael Foot – an episode they would like everyone to forget.

FROM ULTRA-LEFTISM TO OPPORTUNISM

For many years, Mandel, Pablo and Cannon stubbornly refused to recognise the reality of the changed situation following the end of the Second World War.

Then, without any explanation, and without making any criticism of past errors, they jumped from ultra-leftism to opportunism. Instead of the perspective of an immediate economic collapse, they began to flirt with revisionist ideas, including Keynesianism, which they borrowed from the decrepit arsenal of reformism, including bourgeois economics.

Mandel was mesmerised by state intervention, while Tony Cliff adopted the idea of the “permanent arms economy” to explain the post-war upswing. Only our tendency, in the person of Ted Grant, understood what was happening.

In a brilliant analysis written in 1960, ‘*Will There be a Slump?*’, Ted explained the nature of the upswing that was taking place:

“It is true that the rate of growth in the period 1870-1914 was at a higher tempo than in the period between the wars, but that reflected the fact that the relatively progressive nature of capitalism had changed. The world war of 1914-18 marked a definite stage in the development of capitalism. This was reflected in the impasse in which the private ownership of the means of production and the national state had landed society.



The economic upswing, following the second world war, is due to a whole series of factors. There is nothing ‘unique’ in such an upswing. The possibility of such an economic upturn of capitalist society was foreseen by Trotsky in his criticism of the blind mechanical conceptions of the Stalinists.”

He went on to explain the factors that had given rise to the upswing, including the unprecedented expansion of world trade.

“Since the Second World War, capitalism, in an uneven, contradictory fashion, has suffered such a period of ‘rebirth’. It is true that it is a temporary uplift of a rotten and diseased economy, reflecting the old age of capitalism rather than its resilient youth, that it shows all the feebleness of a decayed system. But even within the general decline of capitalism such periods are inevitable so long as the working class, through faulty leadership, fails to end the system. There is no such thing as a ‘last crisis’, a ‘last economic slump’ of capitalism, a ‘ceiling on production’ or any of the other primitive ideas put forward by the Stalinists during the great depression of 1929-1933. Nevertheless, the enfeeblement of capitalism is reflected in the revolutionary events following the Second World War.”

Pierre Lambert, the leader of the French section who was expelled from the Fourth International in 1952, also criticised the revisionism of the other leaders of the In-

ternational, but his only alternative was to stubbornly stick to the false positions adopted by the International immediately after the Second World War.

Flying in the face of the facts, he continued to deny that there had been any development of the productive forces throughout the twentieth century, until the day of his death in 2008.

In reality, in the decades following the end of the Second World War, capitalism was experiencing its biggest economic upswing since the Industrial Revolution. Under these conditions, the Fourth International faced serious difficulties.

The upswing in the economy permitted capitalism to grant certain reforms and improvements in living standards. In Britain, the Labour government that was elected in a landslide victory in 1945 for the first time carried out its programme of reforms including nationalisation. This led to an enormous increase in illusions in reformism.

At the same time, the overthrow of capitalist regimes in Eastern Europe, followed by the great Chinese revolution of 1949 created new illusions in Stalinism among an important layer of the workers and youth.

The road of the Fourth International was therefore blocked by a series of objective obstacles that ruled out the possibility of a rapid development of its forces in most countries.

Even if Marx, Lenin and Trotsky had all been alive, the fundamental objective situation would have remained extremely



difficult. However, as we have said, when an army is forced to retreat and is led by good generals it can retreat in good order, preserving the bulk of its forces in order to regroup and prepare for a new advance when the situation changes.

But bad generals will always turn retreat into a rout. That is precisely what happened to the Fourth International.

Ted, on the other hand, was able to develop a correct perspective, rearm the comrades and prepare the ground for the future:

“From the viewpoint of Marxism, this economic revival of capitalism is not a negative phenomenon only. It enormously strengthens the numbers and cohesion of the working class, and of the position of the working class within the nation. The next break in the economic conjuncture will pose even greater problems in front of capitalism than in the past.”

Ted concluded that the perspective of an inevitable slump was being prepared:

“Whatever the exact date, it is absolutely certain that the unprecedented post-war boom must be followed by a catastrophic downswing, which cannot but have a profound effect on the political thinking of the enormously strengthened ranks of the labour movement.”

It was this ability to analyse the concrete situation as it really was, and not as the sectarian muddleheads would have liked it to be, that allowed Ted to hold together the small forces we had back then. He was

thus able to prepare them for the inevitable downturn in the economy that would come at a later stage, and with it, tumultuous class struggle.

AGAINST THE STREAM!

For a number of years after the destruction of the RCP, Ted Grant and the small group of supporters were compelled to struggle against the stream, under extremely difficult objective conditions.

Then in 1956, titanic events brought about a break in the situation. The Khrushchev revelations and then heroic uprising of the Hungarian workers that was brutally suppressed by Russian tanks, convulsed the Stalinist movement from top to bottom.

In Britain, the Communist Party suffered a serious split, in which it lost a large number of important cadres, including key trade union leaders. Unfortunately, the smallness of our forces made it virtually impossible to win over these elements, some of whom joined the Healy organisation, which they pushed in an ultra-left direction. Others went far to the right, and became agents of the ruling class.

The official Fourth International had lost its base in Britain when in 1953 Healy broke away to join the so-called International Committee. In an attempt to build a section from scratch, the International placed an advertisement in *The Tribune* newspaper, calling on all Trotskyists who were interested in the Fourth International to participate in a conference.

Although Ted and the other comrades had absolutely no illusions in this organ-



isation, they considered that they would have nothing to lose by participating in it, which they did. Subsequently they agreed to unite with another small group to re-found the British section of the Fourth. It should be made clear that this step was done without making any political concessions whatsoever, and certainly with no illusions. But it was seen as possibly a way to overcome our isolation and to enter into contact with co-thinkers in other countries.

For a while, the experiment brought some positive results. But very soon, the old differences would inevitably resurface – and the old manoeuvres and intrigues as well.

Ted became a member of the International Executive Committee, where he had occasion to notice all the problems caused by Pablo's mistakes. Once again, Pablo was banging the war drum, pushing the theory of an imminent nuclear war, which, in some mysterious way, was supposed to lead to socialist revolution.

Ted was quite amused to see the effect of this stupid propaganda, even on leading cadres. He recalls an encounter with one female comrade who, on taking her leave of him with tears in her eyes, said: "Good-bye comrade, this may be the last time that we meet."

To which Ted replied: "Don't worry. Go to bed and sleep soundly. There will not be any war and we will meet again at the next session." It is not recorded whether she was convinced.

He also noticed that there was a solid block of Argentinian comrades, led by a man called Posadas, who were always 1000% loyal to Pablo. In every vote, their hands would always shoot up without hesitation.

After one such vote, Ted took Pablo to one side and said: "You be careful with those people. Today they always vote with you. Tomorrow they will always vote against you." This prediction proved to be correct.

The biggest section of the International was in Sri Lanka – which was then called Ceylon. But Ted noticed that in all the meetings of the IEC, the leading members from Sri Lanka showed quite a contemptuous attitude towards the international leadership.

The leader of the LSSP, NM Pereira was clearly showing opportunist tendencies. Ted said that "NM was never a Trotskyist." But the international leadership made absolutely no attempt to correct him.

When Trotsky was alive, even as a single individual, he carried immense political and moral authority, which inspired respect in all the leading cadres of the International.

But these leaders could never enjoy such authority. Their innumerable mistakes and blunders undermined them, particularly in the eyes of the Sri Lankan comrades, who, after all, were leading a mass organisation.

Inevitably, the whole thing ended in tears. The LSSP joined a Popular Front government in Sri Lanka, causing consternation in the international leadership. But this was the inevitable result of years of failure



to provide firm guidance to the comrades in Sri Lanka. In the panicked reaction, they expelled the entire LSSP, without even attempting to conduct a political struggle to win over the majority.

The differences between the British section and the international leadership became particularly glaring when Mandel, Pablo and co. entered into discussions in the early 1960s with the American SWP with a view to re-establishing “the unity of all Trotskyists.”

Nevertheless, Ted Grant predicted that, based on past experience, these people would only succeed in uniting two internationals into ten. This remark proved to be highly appropriate.

A heated row broke out among the tops of the International on several questions, particularly the nature of the Sino-Soviet split and the colonial revolution.

Pablo came out in favour of supporting the Russian bureaucracy against the Chinese, whereas the others supported the Chinese bureaucracy against Moscow. Ted insisted that this was a struggle between two rival bureaucracies, in which the Fourth International could not support either side.

On the question of the colonial revolution, the leaders of the International adopted the position of uncritical support for guerillaism, while the Americans had a position of uncritical support for Castro’s Cuba, which they characterised as a more or less healthy workers’ state.

This was a carbon copy repeat of the earlier mistake in relation to Tito’s Yugoslav-

via. In effect, these people are looking for shortcuts in the shape of “unconscious Trotskyists”. Having burnt their fingers with Tito, they now proceeded to lavish praise on Castro.

Later on, they were to present Mao Zedong in much the same light, even describing the so-called “Cultural Revolution” in China as a new version of the Paris Commune! All this amounted to an abandonment of the most basic ideas of Trotskyism, and pointed the way to the complete liquidation of the Fourth International, of which there were very clear indications that this was the case.

The small Irish group which stood for the Fourth International was in close contact with the British comrades. They were advised by the International to fuse with a small ultra-Stalinist Irish Maoist organisation led by a man called Clifford.

The condition imposed by Clifford was that there be no discussion on the difference between Stalinism and Trotskyism for the initial period. This they foolishly accepted. But immediately after fusion, Clifford launched a ferocious attack against ‘counterrevolutionary’ Trotskyism. Naturally, the Irish Trotskyists were unable to answer his document and urgently appealed to Ted Grant to write a reply for them. This was done (see *A reply to comrade Clifford*), but it did not prevent the utter shipwreck of the unity plan.

The most blatant case was in Italy, where no significant Maoist organisation existed – until it was launched, in effect, by the Fourth International! The leader of the



Italian section, Livio Maitan, wanted to get copies of Mao's Little Red Book in order to distribute it.

As there was no Chinese embassy in Italy, he travelled to Switzerland and obtained a large number of copies from that source. Thanks to his diligence, the Little Red Book was distributed all over Italy and had a big effect. Unfortunately, the Fourth International got nothing out of it. But they succeeded in spreading illusions in Maoism among wide layers of the radicalised youth at that time, presenting the ideas of Mao as a bridge from Stalinism to Trotskyism. It turned out to be a bridge the other way, with even a grouping within Maitan's organisation splitting away, influenced by Maoism, and building what would become a sizeable ultra-left group in Italy.

NEW INTRIGUES

All this time, Ted and the other comrades maintained a consistent opposition to the false line of the International. The leadership responded, as could be expected, not with arguments, but with manoeuvres and intrigues.

There was a small clique, based in Nottingham, of unprincipled individuals who were intriguing with Paris to undermine the leadership of the British section.

At that time, our organisation was weak, small and with very few financial resources. We had neither a centre nor full-timer. Ted Grant was working in the telephone exchange, devoting all his spare time to the organisation.

It was therefore welcome news that the International had decided to help us by sending us a full timer – a Canadian comrade, who would be paid by the International.

But from the very beginning, it was clear that the work of this individual was not the building of the British section, but to organise and intrigue against the leadership in collaboration with the group in Nottingham.

When these intrigues were exposed, there was a scandal, in which he walked off with all the books in the bookshop that he was supposed to be working for. That was a blatant act of sabotage, which indicated what these people were capable of. But that was just the start.

THE 'UNIFIED SECRETARIAT'

In 1963, the International finally united in a single organisation, known as the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), and immediately, it began to splinter.

Pablo split away, followed by Posadas, while Lambert and Healy remained outside. The unification of 'all Trotskyists' was therefore a dead letter from the start. This was an inevitable consequence of the fatal combination of wrong policies and a poisonous internal regime.

The British comrades from the beginning maintained a principled position. At the 1965 Congress, they submitted a document to the Congress outlining their differences. In the Sino-Soviet dispute, they stood for complete independence from Moscow and Beijing. They explained that



the clash between the two was a reflection of conflicting interests between two rival bureaucracies – neither of which represented the interests of the working class or the world socialist revolution.

In relation to the colonial revolution, while standing firmly in support of the struggle of oppressed people against imperialism, the Fourth International must at all times maintain an independent class policy and not merely trail behind the petty bourgeois leaders.

We rejected the policy of individual terrorism and guerillaism, which played such a fatal role in Latin America at that time, while the leaders of the International adopted an attitude of uncritical support.

The document written by Ted Grant and presented by the British section, ‘The colonial revolution and the sino-soviet split’, represented the only one that stood firmly for a Trotskyist proletarian policy. Since we had no confidence that the international would reproduce it, we took the step of publishing it ourselves, although we suffered from an extreme lack of resources.

However, when the comrades arrived at the Congress, they discovered that our document had not been distributed, so nobody had the chance to read it. Ted Grant later commented ironically:

“Lenin contemptuously called the Second International a post office and not an International. This clique cannot even be dignified as a post office. Organisationally as well as politically, they are completely bankrupt.”

(Grant, *‘Programme of the International’*, May 1970)

In the debate at the Congress, Ted was given a grand total of fifteen minutes (that is, seven minutes, plus translation) to present the document, which naturally had no support. Then, the leaders of the International proceeded to pronounce what amounted to a dishonest expulsion of the British comrades.

Using the false argument that the British comrades were allegedly “incapable of building an organisation”, they proposed to demote them from a full section to a sympathising section, while granting the same status to a small clique that defended the official line of the International.

The comrades rightly denounced this as a dishonest expulsion. We would never return. The break with the so-called Fourth International was permanent and irreversible. Decades of experience serves to convince us that the Fourth International established by Leon Trotsky with such great hopes, finally ended in an abortion.

CONCLUSION

Today, as an organisation, the Fourth International no longer exists in terms of programme or organisation. The myriad of squabbling sects that lay claim to that once proud name has merely served to discredit it totally.

Not a single one of the different sects that emerged from the wreckage of the Fourth International has anything in common with the original ideas.



Though they invoke Trotsky's name with tedious regularity, they have never understood his method. Between them, they all contributed fatally to the destruction of the Fourth.

None of them has anything in common with genuine Bolshevik-Leninism – that is to say, Trotskyism. Each one of them peddles a bizarre caricature that has discredited the very name of Trotskyism in the eyes of advanced workers and youth. That is a crime for which they can never be forgiven.

Consequently, we were a thousand times correct when decades ago we characterised them as utterly sterile and turned our backs on them for good.

Today the banner of Trotskyism is represented by only one organisation that can honestly claim to have defended it with obstinate determination for many decades – the Revolutionary Communist International.

A revolutionary party is, in the final analysis, programme, ideas, methods and traditions.

We have continuously emphasised the importance of revolutionary theory in the building of the International.

Lenin wrote: “without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.” That statement is 100 percent correct. These words were a closed book for the so-called leaders of the Fourth International.

But while the Fourth International was destroyed, the ideas, programme, traditions

and methods elaborated by Leon Trotsky are still alive and retain their full vitality and relevance.

We have inherited the greatest set of ideas of any political grouping in history. This is the heritage that we defend. It is our most powerful weapon and it enables us to say that never before has the revolutionary vanguard been so prepared theoretically for the tasks ahead as now.

We base ourselves on the greatest achievements of the First, Second, Third Internationals, and the founding congress of the Fourth.

Ted Grant rescued these ideas and developed and enriched them for over half a century. The publication of his collected works is a most important addition to our theoretical arsenal.

Our cause is a great one, because we stand on the shoulders of giants. Our task is to complete that monumental work, raising our modest forces to the level of the momentous tasks posed by history.

The IS,
London,
9th June 2025

SELECTED ORGANISATIONAL DOCUMENTS OF THE RCI

August 2025 will see the World Congress of the Revolutionary Communist International.

Over the years, we have built up a lot of experience in how best you can build the organisation. Many of these documents will not have been seen by the thousands of comrades who have joined us in the last couple of years alone.

We have compiled some of the best parts of previous resolutions for comrades to read, study and think about how they may apply to their work of building the branches, regions and sections. Comrades should read and think about them carefully.

WHAT IS A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY?

Extract from *Bolshevism: The Road to Revolution*,
by Alan Woods:

The presence of a revolutionary party and leadership is no less decisive for the outcome of the class struggle as is the quality of the army and its general staff in the wars

between nations. The revolutionary party cannot be improvised on the spur of the moment, any more than a general staff can be improvised on the outbreak of war. It has to be systematically prepared over years and decades. This lesson has been demonstrated by the whole of history, especially



the history of the 20th century. Rosa Luxemburg, that great revolutionary and martyr of the working class, always emphasised the revolutionary initiative of the masses as the motor force of revolution. In this, she was absolutely right. In the course of a revolution the masses learn rapidly. But a revolutionary situation, by its very nature, cannot last for long. Society cannot be kept in a permanent state of ferment, nor the working class in a state of white-hot activism. Either a way out is shown in time, or the moment will be lost. There is not enough time to experiment or for the workers to learn by trial and error. In a life-and-death situation, errors are paid for very dearly! Therefore, it is necessary to combine the 'spontaneous' movement of the masses with organisation, programme, perspectives, strategy, and tactics – in a word, with a revolutionary party led by experienced cadres.

A party is not just an organisational form, a name, a banner, a collection of individuals, or an apparatus. A revolutionary party, for a Marxist, is in the first-place *programme, methods, ideas, and traditions*, and only in the second place, an organisation and an apparatus (important as these undoubtedly are) in order to carry these ideas to the broadest layers of the working people. The Marxist party, from the very beginning, must base itself on theory and programme, which is the summing up of the general historical experience of the proletariat. Without this, it is nothing. The building of a revolutionary party always begins with the slow and painstaking work of assembling and educating the cad-

res, which forms the backbone of the party throughout its entire lifetime. That is the first half of the problem. But only the first half. The second half is more complicated: how to reach the mass of the workers with our ideas and programme? This is not at all a simple question.

Marx explained that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself. The mass of the working class learns from experience. They do not learn from books, not because they lack the intelligence, as middle-class snobs imagine, but because they lack the time, the access to culture and the habit of reading that is not something automatic, but is acquired. A worker who returns home after working eight, nine, or ten hours on a building site or on a conveyor belt, is not only physically but mentally tired. The last thing he or she wants to do is to study or go to a meeting. Far better to leave such things to 'those who know'. But if there is a strike, the whole psychology is transformed. And a revolution is like a huge strike of the whole of society. The masses want to understand what is going on, to learn, to think, and to act. Of course, the actions of the masses, bereft of experience and the knowledge of tactics, strategy, and perspectives, find themselves at a disadvantage when faced with the ruling class, which, through its political and military representatives, has had a long experience and is far better prepared for such situations. It has in its hands a whole battery of weapons: control of the state, the army, the police and the judiciary, the press and the other mass media – powerful instruments for moulding



public opinion and for slander, lying, and character assassination. It has many other weapons and auxiliary forces: control of the schools and universities, an army of 'experts', professors, economists, philosophers, lawyers, priests, and others willing to swallow their moral scruples and rally to the defence of 'civilisation' (that is, their own privileges and those of their masters) against 'chaos' and the 'mob'.

The working class does not easily arrive at revolutionary conclusions. If that were so, the task of party building would be redundant. The task of transforming society would be a simple one, if the movement of the working class took place in a straight line. But this is not the case. Over a long historical period, the working class comes to understand the need for organisation. Through the establishment of organisations, both of a trade union and, on a higher level, of a political character, the working class begins to express itself as a class, with an independent identity. In the language of Marx, it passes from a class *in itself* to a class *for itself*. This development takes place over a long historical period through all kinds of struggles, involving the participation, not just of the minority of more or less conscious activists, but of the 'politically untutored masses', who, in general, are awakened to active participation in political (or even trade union) life only on the basis of great events. On the basis of great historical events, the working class begins to create mass organisations, to defend its interests. These historically evolved organisations – the trade unions, cooperatives, and workers' parties – repre-

sent the germ of a new society within the old. They serve to mobilise, organise, train, and educate the class.

The masses, newly awakened to political life, must seek out that political party that is most capable of defending their interests; the party that is most resolute and audacious, but also that shows itself to be most far-sighted, that can point out the way forward at each stage, issuing timely slogans that correspond to the real situation. But how to decide which party and programme is the right one? There are so many! The masses must test the parties and leaders in practice, for there is no other way. This process of successive approximation is both wasteful and time-consuming, but it is the only one possible. In every revolution – not only Russia in 1917, but also France in the 18th century and England in the 17th century – we see a similar process, in which, through experience, the revolutionary masses, by a process of successive approximations, find their way towards the most consistently revolutionary wing. The history of every revolution is thus characterised by the rise and fall of political parties and leaders, a process in which the more extreme tendencies always replace the more moderate, until the movement has run its course.



HOW DO WE BUILD?

THE ROLE OF THE BRANCH

Extract from 'A Balance Sheet of the Turn and the Tasks for the Coming Period', 2025:

The branch is the key unit of the organisation. It is where the activity is organised – paper sales, stalls, interventions at rallies, the organisation of our own public meetings, and so on – and it is where most of the education of the new recruits takes place. We need to pay much attention to the quality of the branch meetings and to the life of the branch in general.

We must be conscious of the fact that if a new recruit, or a promising contact, attends a branch meeting, what they hear being discussed, the way things are organised, but also the answers they get to their questions, will determine whether or not they feel the branch is worth attending. If the branch is raising their level of understanding, if it is widening their horizons, if it is helping them to understand the perspectives and what needs to be done, then they are more likely to continue to attend, learn and gradually move in the direction of being cadres that can lead the activity of a branch. If this work is done systematically, then we will accelerate the process of education, consolidation and cadre building.

We recommend comrades read RCI bulletin 23 (6 December 2024), 'An infiltrator in Denmark...', for an example of a model branch.

YOU MUST PREPARE POLITICALLY!

Extract from 'The Power of Ideas - how do we build a revolutionary organisation', 2023:

Political preparation is the key, not just to the branch work, but to all our work. Good and interesting articles, inspiring lead-offs, thoughtful interventions and points in discussions, thought provoking ideas in discussions with comrades and contacts – in other words, ideas – are what fundamentally fuel our organisation.

The number one task is always to broaden the horizons and to inspire the people who have joined or who could join us. And if we do that – in other words, if we manage to convince the comrades of our ideas, and constantly deepen their understanding of the world around them – then they will overcome all obstacles, and they will make any sacrifice necessary to build the organisation.

But good articles and lead-offs, new angles and thoughtful comments do not materialise out of thin air. To prepare politically



for a meeting requires more than merely thinking about it for a few minutes beforehand. Comrades must constantly be in a process of reading and educating themselves, in particular in the vast armoury of Marxist literature: the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, as well as our own publications.

Trotsky once described the first duty of a revolutionary as being to “understand the causal sequence of events and to find somewhere in the sequence one’s own place.” Such an understanding can only come from a continuous study of theory.

It means that all comrades must, at all times, have a study plan to go through the fundamentals of Marxism and to conquer new fields and topics of interest. This constant infusion of ideas is necessary for comrades to be able to convince, recruit and inspire others.

The theoretical and political level of a comrade is not a static thing that remains at the highest point it has reached in the past. Unless it is constantly nurtured it will inevitably retreat. Like a good knife, the mind of revolutionaries must constantly be sharpened with Marxist theory. The ultimate responsibility for that lies with every individual comrade themselves.

What is required is a constant process of ‘sharpening’ our minds by studying Marxist theory, engaging in practical activity and reflecting about this activity constantly. By doing this, you can build up a ‘feel’ for the work, which enables you to better lead your branch, district, group or section. Comrades must

learn to think. This is what Trotsky criticised the ‘Old Bolsheviks’ like Stalin for not doing:

“Theoretical routine, this absence of political and tactical creativity, cannot replace the need for insight, the ability to surmise things at a glance, the flair for ‘feeling’ a situation, while unravelling the main threads and developing an overall strategy. It is in a revolutionary period, and especially an insurrectionary one that these qualities become decisive.” (‘On Organisational Problems’, Fred Zeller, 1935.)



HOW TO TRAIN CADRES

ROLE OF THE BRANCH

Extract from 'How Can We Build the Organisation?', 2012:

The most important objective of the branch is to educate the cadres. That means developing comrades who can think for themselves, intervene in the labour movement, judge a situation and answer questions and decide the priorities etc. in a given situation. We aspire to make every comrade in the organisation into such a person, but this takes time.

First of all, every comrade must be well acquainted with the Marxist classics. However, the education of the cadres also comes from intervening in the movement. Merely repeating the fundamentals of Marxism is not enough. Some comrades have read a lot, and yet are completely incapable of communicating with the workers.

Marxism is a science and also an art. The branch agenda should be tailored in such a way that the basic theoretical questions are covered. But it is also important to make sure that theory is not discussed in the abstract, but is linked to the everyday interventions in the labour movement. A theoretical discussion that provides the ideas with which to answer the arguments that comrades meet in their interventions in the labour movement will become more

concrete. One must study theory, but also be able to use the ideas to connect to the real living movement of the workers, to apply the ideas to what people are experiencing in everyday life, to convince people of the superiority of our ideas, and recruit them to the organisation.

BALANCING QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE GROWTH

Extract from 'A Balance Sheet of the Turn':

After very rapid growth a plateau can be hit, where it seems the organisation is not growing. The fact of the matter is that recruitment remains strong. The problem, as we have stated, is insufficient consolidation. This, however, can also be greater than it needs to be if we get the balance between theory and practice – between internal education and external activity – wrong. In this we believe there have been some exaggerations, which in some cases may have served to increase the turnover instead of reducing it. (...)

One clear exaggeration was the idea that there are literally millions of ready-made communists out there, and that all you need to do is find them, ask them if they are communists, and get them to join the party. And as they are ready-made, they



don't need educating in the basic ideas of Marxism. With this, emphasis was placed on the idea that new comrades learn simply by being given tasks, and through participating in activity on the ground.

It is true, the radicalised youth we are recruiting, many of whom already consider themselves Communists, don't want to just participate in a reading group about Marxism. They also want to be involved in the concrete work of building a revolutionary party, going out and finding the next layer of potential recruits, intervening in the struggles of the working class and of the youth.

Again, as often happens, this idea can be interpreted in two ways. There is absolutely no doubt that theory without action is sterile. We are not a book club; we are a revolutionary party that intervenes in the real movement. But action without theory is equally sterile. What is required is a balance between the two. By being active in the movement, our comrades get a feel of the level of consciousness at any given moment; they see what kind of questions are being posed, and thus get a feel of the questions they need to understand so as to be able to be more effective in the responses they give when discussing with the workers and youth we encounter.

The exaggeration that crept in was that the millions of communists out there do not require education. This is a serious mistake. Education is still a very important part of our work. Without it we will not build the cadres that we need. And this in turn will translate into a less effective organisation.

Extract from 'The Power of Ideas':

It would be wrong to assume that the task of consolidation and integration of new comrades somehow stands in opposition to growth and contact work. In reality, growth and education are two sides of the same coin, like theory and practice. Young, new comrades are often the best recruiters because of their enthusiasm for their newly-found ideas.

Recruitment is the lifeblood of the organisation. It is our primary activity, and the final realisation of all our other efforts. It is precisely in this field, where the comrades apply our ideas and defend them in front of workers and young people, that they are educated.

The point is not to put a brake on recruitment, but to use it as a lever to raise the level of our comrades. At the same time, raising the theoretical level is the means to improve recruitment. All experience shows that recruitment improves in tandem with the education of the comrades and vice versa.

INVOLVE COMRADES IN THE WORK AND DISCUSS POLITICS WITH THEM

Extract from The Power of Ideas:

Ted Grant used to insist that new members be treated as "contact-members" for the first period of their membership, i.e. that they be given special attention in order to raise their political level.



All new members must be followed up individually by a more experienced comrade, who meets up with them regularly to discuss and explain our ideas, our history, our methods and the way that we work. They should be asked what they think, what doubts or questions they have, and what aspects of the organisation they do not understand.

They should be taken along to paper sales and contact meetings, and in general introduced to our practical activities. And they should also be given a suitable responsibility – regardless of how small it is – as well as the necessary assistance to carry it out. They need to feel that they are not just passive spectators, but rather that their work plays a part in the general task of building a revolutionary organisation. Gradually, in this way, we can educate the new comrades and integrate them in the work.

Sometimes, in spite of everything, newer comrades reveal certain disagreements with our ideas and methods after they have joined. In such cases there can occasionally be a tendency to avoid a discussion and take a wait-and-see attitude, hoping that the disagreements will disappear. But this is the wrong approach. The best way to educate the comrades is to deal with differences head on, when they arise.

This could be by raising the question in the branch, and openly and clearly explaining our positions, or via individual discussions. No harm will come from telling a new comrade that they are wrong, but a lot of harm can come if we refrain from doing so.

Clearly addressing a new comrade's political weaknesses will help to develop them faster, as long as it is done in a calm manner and as long as they want to learn. In some cases the disagreement may be of a more fundamental nature and a clear discussion will help them decide whether they are in the right organisation or not. Our highest aim is theoretical clarity, and that cannot be achieved by ignoring differences, even small ones.

LEADING COMRADES NEED TO PRIORITISE POLITICAL DISCUSSION

Extract from 'How Can We Build the Organisation':

This is a key aspect in building the organisation, and the leading comrades of the branch have got to find the time to do this work. Very often the cadres of the organisation feel pressured to take on all the tasks themselves, from paper sales to interventions in the labour movement. This is the wrong way to approach the question of consolidation. An important part of the weekly routine of a cadre should be finding the time for one-to-one discussions with the new members. During such discussions, many questions – both of a theoretical and organisational nature – can be hammered out and answered, doubts can be clarified, etc. The activity of the new members should also be reviewed in such discussions.

Failure to attend to this can mean that good people simply slip through our fingers. It leads to a kind of "revolving-door



syndrome” where people join and then immediately drop out again. This is like building on sand. But there is nothing inevitable about this. It depends on us.

Intelligent and tactful guidance from the older, more experienced comrades plays an important role in educating the cadres. But there must also be a balance. Young comrades also need room to develop. We must not stifle the development of the young comrades but encourage them to develop and think for themselves. Sometimes they will make mistakes. These should be discussed, explained and corrected in a patient and comradely manner. Trotsky once said that it was the privilege of youth to make mistakes. But he also added that young people should not abuse that privilege!

READING GROUPS

Extract from ‘The Power of Ideas’:

One of the important tools we use in the work of educating comrades are reading groups. These can be very helpful, especially to help introduce new comrades to Marxist literature. All new comrades should be offered to join a reading group. But this also means that attention must be given to the running of the groups, so as to make them as interesting and engaging as possible.

The point of a reading group is not for the leading comrades to give long lead-offs about the minutiae of the text, but to make the participants actively think and try to get to the bottom of the main essen-

tial points in it via discussion. The role of the leading comrade is more one of guiding rather than lecturing: to make sure the discussions are interesting and lively, that everyone participates in them, that they focus on key questions and, finally, after each question has been discussed, to briefly and clearly sum up the main lessons.

Reading groups play an important role in educational work. However, it would be wrong to think that reading groups are the sole avenue for the political education of comrades. People are different and must be treated differently.

For some comrades, a reading group can be very helpful. For others, it can feel like a chore, or like homework. That is especially true if the reading group is being run in a dry, routine and uninvolved manner, which consequently means that comrades do not develop. (...)

Reading groups are important. But it would be a big mistake to assume that they can somehow replace individual reading. And individual reading cannot be stimulated via organisational measures or by mindlessly pushing and insisting on comrades reading.

The way to encourage comrades to read and educate themselves is first of all by inspiring them politically, by presenting them with new ideas. And that is not always done via prescribed reading. Often more success is had with verbal discussions.

When new comrades enter our ranks, they do so with an enormous thirst for knowledge about everything around them.



We must take our time to sit down with them in a more informal setting, listen carefully to their thoughts and questions, and patiently answer their questions in a clear manner.

This could touch upon anything, from current events like the Ukraine war, the history and methods of our organisation, our position on identity politics, the history of the Russian Revolution, art, philosophy, history, and so on and so forth.

In all our interactions with new comrades, our aim must be to give them a deeper insight into the world around them, that is, to raise their level and to broaden their horizons. If we can achieve that, we will give them the necessary inspiration and motivation to go on to study by themselves.

DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Every branch, every committee or body of the organisation is a team of various comrades. The aim must be for these teams to be greater than the sum of their parts: the strengths of some comrades counteract the weaknesses of others to create powerful machines. The leading comrades must delegate tasks to newer comrades. They must maintain a careful balance between, on the one hand, providing help, advice and political inspiration and, on the other, giving newer comrades room to take ownership of their roles. Trotsky had some useful advice for Fred Zeller on this topic:

Extract from 'On Organisational Problems', by Fred Zeller, 1935:

The difficulty of grand human constructions is choosing judiciously which personality is best suited for such and such a role. The art of the organiser consists in accustoming individuals to working together so that each becomes the complement of the other. An 'apparatus' is an orchestra where each instrument expresses itself individually only to blend and fade into the harmony created.

"Avoid placing members of equal value and temperament on a work committee. They will nullify each other without obtaining the intended results.

Knowing how to choose a comrade for a given task; patiently explaining what is expected from them; acting with subtlety and tact, this is what true leadership means.

Leave the maximum amount of initiative to the comrade responsible for the work. In case of mistakes, correct them by explaining amicably how they are prejudicial to the interests of the Party. Only impose sanctions in the most serious of cases. The general rule must be to permit each to progress, to develop and improve.

Do not lose yourself in secondary details which mask the totality of the situation. Only do what you can with the forces you have. Never more, except admittedly in decisive situations."



WHAT MAKES A GOOD BRANCH?

THE POLITICAL DISCUSSION IS THE KEY

Extract from 'The Power of Ideas':

Branch work involves many small organisational tasks, which constantly threaten to overshadow the most important part of the meetings: the political discussion. But we must continually strive to keep the focus on the ideas. Political preparation, therefore, must be the highest of all priorities when it comes to branch work.

In practice, this means that before every meeting, every single comrade should ask themselves: "What can I do to make this branch meeting interesting, educational and successful?" And they should spend the necessary time to answer this question.

What does that mean? The most important task of the branch meeting is the lead-off. The comrades should make every effort to make this as interesting and well delivered as possible.

A good lead-off is first of all concrete, and not full of generalities and abstract formulas. It should also have a clear focus on the most important and essential points, rather than delving too much into secondary details. Furthermore, we must take care that lead-offs do not go over the same

ground again and again, using the same phrases and examples as we have used many times before.

Even if we give a lead-off on a topic that we have given many times before, we should try to approach it from new angles, or infuse it with new anecdotes and quotes in order to keep it interesting for those who have heard it before. The point is to try to stimulate thinking and to expand the horizons of the comrades. We should also pay attention to the delivery of the lead-off, which should be lively and accessible, without the use of convoluted words and long-winded formulations.

Likewise, comrades should think in advance about points that they can make in the discussion, and if possible look for interesting new facts and anecdotes that they can use in these. The interventions should be short, concrete and thoughtful. The aim is not to give another lead-off, but to instigate a lively discussion, and again, to make others think and to inspire them.



WE NEED TO BE PROFESSIONAL

Extract from 'On Party Building', 2014:

Every revolutionary organization passes through an initial embryonic phase, where the "small circle" psychology dominates. In a small group where everybody knows everybody else, personal elements play an exaggerated role and personal questions can get mixed up with political issues. In such a milieu, informal methods take the place of serious disciplined procedures.

But as the organization develops, these amateurish informal methods become an obstacle. It is absolutely necessary to correct and overcome these bad methods in order that the organization can grow and develop. The struggle to eradicate the bad habits of the past can often lead to frictions and even splits. Those comrades who cling to the old methods resist change. That was the cause of the split between Bolshevism and Menshevism in 1903. (...)

Lenin stressed repeatedly that every revolutionary should strive to become a professional, that is, someone whose whole life is devoted to building the revolutionary party. Amateurism and dilettantism are incompatible with a Bolshevik organization. The role of the leadership is fundamental in setting the right tone. This is first of all a political question. But it also applies to organizational issues. (...)

We must always pay serious attention to theory. This is the foundation of the organization. A house with weak founda-

tions will fall down in the end. However, this is not sufficient. A house cannot be considered finished when the foundations are laid. Trotsky said that ideas without organization are like a knife without a blade.

This approach needs to be applied to our branch work, as explained in the following.

Extract from 'How Can We Build the Organisation':

Every comrade should be kept regularly informed of all the aspects of the work of the Tendency, nationally and internationally. Minutes are to be taken at every meeting. These must not be a detailed account of everything that is said, but rather a record of all the decisions made.

It is vital that every decision should include the name of the comrade or comrades who are responsible for carrying it out, and a date by which this is to be done. This provides an essential check on the implementation of decisions, and the minutes must be read out at the start of every branch meeting for this purpose.

We must make sure that the branch is functioning efficiently. Workers have very limited time and we must not waste it. A worker who comes to a branch meeting and finds that it is wasting a lot of time by comrades arriving late will conclude that we are not serious people.

We need to have a good chairperson in the branch to ensure that meetings are conducted in a businesslike way. Since we only have 2 to 2 and half hours for a branch meeting, time is precious and must not be wasted through sloppiness.



ORGANISATIONAL PART OF THE MEETING

Extract from 'The Power of Ideas':

Matters such as correspondence, reports, or organisational points should not be treated in a routine manner. Reports and correspondence are not just formal points aimed at delivering dry information to the comrades. They are ways to highlight our successes, raise morale, inspire the comrades, and to show how we can do things.

When it comes to the organisational points, it is important to make sure they are dealt with in an efficient and business-like manner. That means that the branch officers need to have prepared the points, and to have proposals ready on each one, so that the branch does not have to discuss everything from scratch. Concrete agreements and targets should be reached and comrades should be allocated to carry out each of the necessary tasks.

We need to think about how every point on the branch agenda can be made into an interesting and inspiring lesson for all. This is not a secondary matter. Our goal is to make the branch meeting the high point of the week for all comrades, who should feel that every time they come to branch, they learn something new and interesting.

SPLITTING A BRANCH

Extract from 'A Balance Sheet of the Turn':

Where there are sufficient cadres on the ground, splitting a branch can achieve

important results... It can allow for more comrades to take on responsibilities, leaves more room for all the comrades to participate in the discussions, and reduces the risk of a passive layer developing within the branches. But there is a limit.

Very often, comparisons are made between the growth of a body and the growth of the party. References are made to cells that split and split again, leading to a spurt of growth. But we must not forget that if in this process the cells lose the basic DNA – the basic building blocks – of the kind of party we wish to build we can end up with a deformation.

The reports we have had from some sections are that, where the necessary preparatory training up of comrades had not been done, in some cases splitting the branch led either to the collapse of some branches or at some point to the fusing back together of branches. The reason for this is that inexperienced young comrades with an insufficient theoretical level were being asked to run branches, recruit, educate, etc., without the necessary prior education to the level required to carry out these tasks. Again, this flowed from the idea that the recruits were ready-made communists that did not require political training.

It is here that the lack of education and consolidation is placed sharply into focus. A small branch requires at least one cadre who can answer basic questions, who knows how to run a branch, who can help to prepare good lead-offs in the weekly meetings, and so on.



WE NEED A SENSE OF PROPORTION

Extract from 'A Balance Sheet of the Turn':

Ted Grant always insisted that one of the required qualities of a revolutionary is a sense of proportion. We must never lose sight of the real forces we have and what can be done with those forces. This is important in evaluating what we have on the ground. With small forces it is not possible to provide the leadership the working class and the youth require. One can break the back of an organisation if it is pushed to assume tasks it is not equipped for.

At the same time, it is necessary to break with any conservatism that stifles the potential for growth. Here, again, it is a question of balance. Where we have built up a sufficient base, and where the objective conditions permit, we should be promoting actions and even providing leadership to the movement.

However, we have to be aware of the fact that different sections are at different levels of development. And within each section there are areas where we have a strong base and others where we do not. If we do not take these important elements into consideration, we can make mistakes of either a conservative or an adventurist nature.

One of the important aspects of the turn was to push the organisation to be bolder, to conquer authority in the movement as the party that is capable of concretely providing ideas with which to lead. And where such possibilities are real we should

take the lead. But we should always do so by evaluating our real strength on the ground. We should also take into account the real objective conditions. We cannot artificially promote movements where the mood does not exist for such action. Equally, we must not hold back from providing a lead where we have the forces and the mood does exist.

This question became evident during the Palestine solidarity encampment movement. We made some important interventions, and there were instances where we played an important role in providing the required leadership. However, there were also cases where, despite not having the sufficient forces, comrades attempted to "lead". This can mean very small forces taking on tasks that are well beyond them, which in turn can lead to comrades running around, adapting themselves to, or in effect substituting themselves for the movement, and eventually getting tired and even burning out.



CONTACT WORK

WE MUST CONVINC PEOPLE!

Extract from 'The Power of Ideas':

It sometimes occurs that in the eagerness to recruit our contacts, the most important aspect – political discussion – is not given sufficient attention. When a contact comes to an open meeting, and he or she is enthused by it, the comrades should immediately follow them up, invite them to a branch meeting, give them the necessary documents to read, and ask them to join.

There is another side to this, however. The degree to which the contact has understood our ideas and the extent to which he or she agrees with them has perhaps not always been fully grasped. Sometimes this has led to people who fundamentally disagree with our ideas joining our organisation merely because we are the most visible, most enthusiastic and best organised force.

Contact work is not an administrative act. It cannot be carried out by ticking checkboxes. More often than not, this approach turns the best people away. The real objective of contact work is not to make the contact pay their subs or sign on the dotted line. Rather, it is first and foremost to convince them of the ideas!

This, of course, cannot be done with a passive approach. We must imbue our-

selves with a will to convince people and help the contacts overcome their political doubts and shortcomings. It is not possible to build a revolutionary organisation without such determination.

That does not mean that we berate our contacts and force our ideas onto them until they accept them. On the contrary, we want to make our contacts think – something that can only be done via a dialogue.

As the ancient Greek proverb goes, “we have two ears and one mouth, therefore we should listen twice as much as we speak.” These are wise words that Marxists should bear in mind at all times. When it comes to contact work our first task is to understand the position of the contacts.

Therefore we must start by asking questions and patiently listening to their answers and thoughts about Marxism, current events, the latest meeting they attended, the texts they have read, and so on and so forth. Once we have identified the points that need clarification we can proceed to address these in a friendly but clear manner.

At the same time it is important also to involve the contacts in the practical work of the organisation, take them along to paper sales, demonstrations, open meetings and other activities as well as encouraging them to help us spread our ideas and to re-



cruit people that they know. This is an important aspect in drawing contacts closer to the organisation as a part of the ongoing face-to-face political discussion.

A rushed and organisational approach to contact work, one that fails to get the main political ideas across, will not convince anyone. Quite the contrary, it will soon tire out the best people and push them away from us. The better we convince the contacts of our ideas, the more eagerly and energetically will they join and integrate into the work of the organisation.

HOW TO SPEAK TO A CONTACT

Extract from 'How Can we Build the Organisation':

There are different techniques of contact work. The older, more experienced comrades should make a point of taking a young comrade who has never done contact work along to discuss with a contact...

Many good young people hold incorrect ideas: reformism, anarchism, Stalinism, etc. They must be won over. This cannot be done by pressure or ultimatums. In the first place, we should always seek the common ground – concentrating on what unites us, and gradually explain the reasons why the ideas of Marxism are correct.

Remember that a dialogue presupposes two sides. All too often comrades lecture people, not letting them get a word in edgeways. We must learn how to LISTEN to people. Ask questions.

Contacts must feel able to ask questions, make comments, or we will never be able to judge whether they agree with us or not. Their questions and criticisms must be answered intelligently and patiently. (...)

Contacts do not all join at the same pace. Some contacts will join straight away. In many cases they've been waiting to join the revolutionary tendency and do not need any convincing. Others will take their time. Most people will not say yes immediately. This is quite understandable. They want to listen, they want to understand, they want to ask questions, and they want to know more about our ideas. Some people may even take years to recruit.

If a contact doesn't immediately agree or doesn't immediately understand it's our task to help them understand by giving them reading material, listening to the questions they ask and being able to answer them. We must avoid any manifestations of impatience. Too often we hear people say at a branch: "Oh, so-and-so is useless!" Why? Only because the first time they asked him or her to join they didn't say yes. This is a bad mistake. Instead of blaming the contacts we should ask whether we made some mistake in the way we approached them.

If you can't recruit a contact, there are two possibilities: it's either you have failed adequately to explain the ideas of the Tendency, which is a possibility, or the contact may be unwinnable. Even if we don't recruit every contact, we must also draw up a list of sympathisers, subscribers to the pa-



pers and people who are prepared to give regular financial donations.

LEARN TO BE JUDICIOUS

Extract from 'The Power of Ideas':

When dealing with contacts, there is no one-size-fits-all formula. Different types of people should be treated differently. There are some people who are organically incapable of becoming Marxists and who should never be recruited. We must learn to recognise these and avoid spending any more time than necessary on them. We are not an academic discussion club, a social circle for lost souls or a support group. We are a revolutionary organisation with no time to waste!

There are others who have potential and enthusiasm, but who may have illusions in some postmodern ideas or otherwise have

some confusions about Marxism. By being firm in explaining the basic ideas of Marxism, these can be convinced.

We must be thorough and selective in our recruitment. However, that does not mean keeping the doors to the organisation shut to the best of the youth. If we meet people who are new, fresh and enthusiastic, we should not be afraid of asking them to join at the earliest possible opportunity, even if that is after just one discussion.

We cannot expect people to be fully formed Bolsheviks before they join. If that were possible, there would be no need for our organisation. As a general rule, people learn far faster inside than outside the organisation. The key point is to have a serious attitude in the education of new comrades once they are in, so as to help them develop a sufficient political level as soon as possible.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

Extract from 'The Power of Ideas':

One of the things that the enemies of Communism always target is the question of democratic centralism. Among the postmodernists and the anarchists, there has always been a notion that a horizontal form of organisation is the best and most democratic.

But these are neither the best nor the most democratic. Furthermore, they are

not the methods of Bolshevism or of the working class. They are the methods of the petty bourgeois, whose sole concern is their own so-called individual freedom, which amounts to the negation of party democracy.

Such ideas have also been echoed by some of our enemies in their attacks against us. They demand that any individual comrade or branch should have the right to



do as they please without any reference, or even against, the general line of the organisation agreed through the democratic channels. For a revolutionary proletarian organisation, however, such methods would lead to complete paralysis and in essence, liquidation.

These ideas, which subordinate the organisation to the individual, can also manifest themselves in the form of the quest for personal prestige. This petty-bourgeois approach, which leads to competition and mutual distrust between comrades, is potentially destructive and must be rejected as completely incompatible with our organisation, which is based on collective work and the subordination of the part to the whole, and in which each comrade's contribution is based on an understanding of the organisation's overall goals and directed towards their pursuit.

The idea that the internal – as well as the external – publications of the organisation should carry the input of any and all comrades who want to have their ideas published would essentially reduce the central bodies of the organisation to mere post offices, in charge of posting and passing on messages from individual members and branches.

We, on the contrary, build on the principles of democratic centralism. This means that anyone is free to raise questions, doubts, or disagreements, even very strong disagreements. But this needs to be done, first of all, through the correct, democratic structures of the organisation, starting with the branch and then moving up.

These democratic structures exist to strengthen the organisation. By debating ideas internally we can raise the level of political understanding of all our comrades. It is therefore the duty of every comrade to raise their political level and make use of the democratic structures to clarify points of doubt or disagreement. This, and not any rules or constitutional safeguards, is the only guarantee against political or organisational degeneration in our ranks.

We elect a leadership composed of proven comrades with the best political level, precisely those we think are most capable of working out perspectives and ideas, and to direct the activity of the whole organisation. The leadership, as opposed to the individual member, is elected democratically to represent the voice of the organisation as a whole. For the petty bourgeois, however, the individual voice is always greater than the collective.

In our organisation, the leadership is entrusted to take the necessary decisions to advance the work and the ideas. Of course, any such decisions can then be ratified, changed or rejected through the democratic bodies, such as the Congress. The important thing to remember is that all questions are open to being discussed throughout the organisation. Once the discussion has ended, however, the outcome is resolved via a vote, which binds all comrades.

The membership can also choose to elect a different leadership if it deems it necessary. But that does not alter the tasks and responsibility of the leadership, which is absolutely necessary to maintain the organi-



sation as a fighting force that can act and intervene quickly and in a united manner.

It would be wrong to think that a Bolshevik leadership is merely a necessary evil. Quite the opposite: a Bolshevik organisation is built from the top down, by the most able and experienced comrades. The leadership is not elected to reflect the immediate consciousness of the membership; rather, it is elected from amongst the best comrades with the highest theoretical level, political understanding and general ability to lead the organisation.

A revolutionary leadership rests on its political and moral authority. Good leaders

base themselves on Marxist theory to raise the level of the organisation, and to lead it in the right direction at the right time. The indispensable role of Lenin and Trotsky in the October Revolution is a clear testament to the necessity of high-quality leadership.

A good leadership strengthens the organisation and brings the best out in all comrades, whereas a bad leadership weakens the organisation and demoralises the members. The leadership always sets the tone and it is its task to inspire the organisation and infuse it with ideas.

THE PAPER

Extract from *Bolshevism: The Road to Revolution, Part One*,
by Alan Woods:

The essential idea which runs through *What Is To Be Done?* is the need to train worker cadres, not just class-conscious trade union militants, but workers with a clear grasp of the ideas of Marxism:

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of political activity.”

What Lenin was driving at here was not at all a belittling of the capacity of the workers to understand but quite the opposite. His main concern was to combat the petty bourgeois prejudice that ‘workers cannot understand theory’ and that the party literature must confine itself to economic slogans and immediate demands. On the contrary, Lenin insisted that:

“[I]t is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of ‘literature for workers’ but that they learn to an increasing degree to master general literature. It would be even truer to say ‘are not confined’, instead of



‘do not confine themselves’ because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia, and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough ‘for workers’ to be told a few things about factory conditions and to have repeated to them over and over again what has long been known.” (*LCW*, vol. 5, p. 369, my emphasis and p. 384, note.)

Starting from the immediate problems of the working class, fighting for all kinds of partial demands, it is necessary to go beyond the particular and establish the link with the general, from the struggle of groups of workers against individual employers, to the struggle of the working class as a whole against the bourgeoisie and its state. In a brilliant line of argument, Lenin established the dialectical interrelation between agitation, propaganda, and theory and explained the way in which the small forces of Marxism, by winning over the most advanced layers of the class, can subsequently win over the mass of the proletariat, and through the latter, all other oppressed layers of society... The Economists were initially successful because they merely adapted to the prejudices of the most backward layers of the workers. But as Lenin argued: the workers are not children to be fed on such thin gruel. They do not want to be told what they already know. The workers have a thirst for knowledge, which it is the duty of the Marxists to satisfy. Taking as the starting point the immediate problems of the working people, it is necessary to raise the level of con-

sciousness to a full understanding of its role in society, pointing the way forward out of the impasse.

Extract from *Bolshevism: The Road to Revolution*, Part Four,
by Alan Woods:

Pravda was much more than a paper. It was a real organiser. In its pages there was not only a lot of information about the workers’ movement, but also directives and slogans, and many letters about the life and conditions of the workers written by workers themselves. This was not just a paper ‘for workers’, but a real workers’ paper, something they could identify with as their own. However, *Pravda* did not limit itself to describing what is. It also included theory as a necessary means of raising the consciousness of its readers to the level of the tasks demanded by history. It regularly featured Lenin’s articles, which provided the necessary theoretical generalisations and explanations, as well as polemics against other trends, with particular emphasis on exposing the Liquidators.

Extract from ‘A Few Words on
Lutte Ouvrière’, by Leon Trotsky:

A paper is a unified whole. It must not only exhort its readers and urge them on; it must also educate them by giving them a theoretical grounding and by opening up a political perspective for them...

Extract from ‘The Newspaper
and Its Readers’, by Leon Trotsky:

The writer, especially in a newspaper, must start off not from himself, but from the reader. This is a very important differ-



ence, and is expressed in the construction of every individual article and of the edition as a whole.

In the one case a writer (unskillful, not understanding his job) simply presents the reader with himself, his views, his thoughts, or frequently – nothing but his phrases. In the other, a writer who approaches his task properly leads the reader himself to the necessary conclusions, using for this the everyday experience of the life of the masses.

Extract from 'How Can We Build the Organisation':

We need a good paper organiser, who every week makes sure the comrades have received their papers and are organising the paper sales. Each branch should have at least one regular weekly paper sale.

Lenin pointed out that a Marxist paper is a collective organizer. The paper is the public face of our tendency. It is what we offer to contacts. It tells them what we are and what ideas we defend. That is the importance of selling the paper, both individually, to people around us, on campus, in the workplace or in our trade union branch, and on mass organized paper sales in strikes, demonstrations, meetings, etc.

How we sell the paper is an important question. We should not stand around talking to each other at a stall, forming a circle whereby nobody can see the stall, but adopt an active and audacious attitude. We must go out amongst the people and talk to them. We should use the paper to explain our ideas, and above all get people's phone numbers.

FINANCES

Extracts from 'IMT Finance Resolution', 2018:

Finances are a necessary and important part of our work. It gives us the means to pay for full timers, premises, papers, books, leaflets etc. A serious attitude towards finance is the mark of a revolutionary organisation, and like all other aspects of the work it is a constant struggle that can never be treated in a routinist fashion. (...)

All tendencies that have a light-minded attitude towards finance end up with an

opportunist approach in politics. Instead of raising their funds among the committed communist workers, the organisation would be forced to seek its funding from rich individuals or from the state. This was the case with the Mensheviks, and it is the case today among the reformists, as well as many sects and anarchists. Financial dependency inevitably becomes a political dependency...

As a revolutionary tendency we must depend on our comrades and sympathisers as



part of their political commitment to the tendency. This means that we mustn't have a timid approach to finances. We must be open about our need for finance, and explain it politically. If we do not, it immediately poses the question whether we are serious about our work. It would appear as though we don't really believe in what we are saying.

Trotsky in his struggle to build the Third and Fourth Internationals encountered many such characters, particularly in the reformist milieu: petty bourgeois dilettantes who wanted to live a nice, cosy, well-paid life as a lawyer or a similar profession whilst paying lip service to revolutionary ideas. Trotsky didn't mince his words with such characters:

“For the majority of socialists – I have in mind the top strata – their socialism is a side issue, a secondary occupation accommodated to their leisure hours. These gentlemen devote six days of the week to their liberal or business professions, rounding out their fortunes well enough; on the seventh day they consent to occupy themselves with the salvation of their souls [...] Evidently not a few of these gentlemen have succeeded in masquerading as communists. These are not intellectual opponents, but class enemies. [...] There is nothing more disgusting and dangerous in revolutionary activity than petty-bourgeois dilettantism, conservative, self-satisfied, and incapable of sacrifice in the name of a great idea. The advanced workers must firmly adopt one sim-

ple but invariable rule: Those leaders or candidates for leadership who, in peaceful every-day times, are incapable of sacrificing their time, their talents, and their money to the cause of communism, are the most likely, in a revolutionary period, to turn traitor or to turn up in the camp of those who wait to see on which side the victory lies.” (“Tasks of the American Opposition”, 1929)

Individuals of such character Trotsky considered fellow-travellers and he insisted that they should be made use of, but that they were not cadre material. Instead the party must choose as its leaders self-sacrificing individuals. The party must aim for those “for whom the idea of communism, once they are imbued with it, becomes the content of their entire life and activity.” (Ibid.) (...)

It is the leading comrades in the branches and nationally that need to set an example. In his polemics with one particular French comrade (“Paz”), Trotsky explained all the qualities that this particular comrade lacked, but were needed:

“You can have revolutionaries both wise and ignorant, intelligent or mediocre. But you can't have revolutionaries who lack the willingness to smash obstacles, who lack devotion and the spirit of sacrifice.” (“How revolutionaries are formed”, 1929.)

The argument was over the question of a weekly paper, an enterprise the young comrades were prepared to undertake but the supposed leader, comrade Paz, always



found excuses to postpone or not undertake. The young comrades, although not as well educated as Paz, had the will to build the organisation and make the necessary sacrifices. (...)

We need to train our new and young comrades with a spirit of revolutionary sacrifice, through political explanation of perspectives and the needs of the organisation, and through leading by example. As Trotsky told Paz, “You begin, you set a good example, and then you make demands on others, because you have a right to make demands in the name of a common cause.” It is necessary to make demands on others. Like in other aspects of the work, the leading comrades cannot simply substitute themselves for the rest of the organisation, but set the example, and convince the other comrades to follow.

Raising finances starts with a political explanation, outlining why the money is needed and for what purpose. This means developing perspectives both for the objective situation and for the organisation, and explaining what, specifically, the money is for. (...)

Above all the question of finances is a political question. As Leon Trotsky told Fred Zeller:

“That which is well thought out and clearly expressed... the means of saying it will come easily! To the extent to which you have a clear theoretical vision of things, you will also have the political will to make them happen. If you really want to succeed in doing that which you have clearly

understood, then you will also be capable of finding the means.”

Fundamentally, therefore, a branch treasurer must raise the political level of the comrades in the branch. If we do this, all other questions will be dealt with much more easily. As explained in this extract from ‘How Can We Build the Organisation’:

“Every branch needs to have a good treasurer to supervise the systematic collection of subs and fighting funds. This will avoid a situation where comrades fall behind with subs. It is the task of the treasurer not only to organize the collection of subs but to strive to raise the collective awareness of the comrades on the vital importance of finance in a revolutionary organization – to make every comrade finance-conscious.”



A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT

Extract from 'How Can We Build the Organisation':

Everybody knows that if you run the marathon at the speed of a 100-metre sprint you'll never get to the end. You will collapse and destroy yourself. The work of building the revolutionary tendency is not a 100-metre sprint. It is a very long marathon and we must learn to pace ourselves. In the long run it is systematic, steady work that will produce a strong and solid organisation.

We must ensure that the organization is in good condition to take advantage of the possibilities that undoubtedly exist. The issue can be very simply stated: look out for each and every possibility and exploit it to the full.

It is necessary to establish strict priorities for our work. We cannot be everywhere at all times. Some comrades are very active from Monday to Sunday, staggering from one routine meeting to another. This is very wasteful and not necessarily very profitable. It reminds one of something Trotsky wrote: "the wheels can turn but they grind no corn!"

We must be very economical with our time. We must have the attitude of a shrewd investor who is always looking for the kind of investment that brings the maximum gain in the shortest time with

the least possible outlay. Our activities must always be aimed at building the revolutionary organisation.

There was an old saying in Latin, "Festina lente!" which means "Make haste slowly!" That is very good advice. We must strike the necessary balance between the intervention in the movement and the necessary time to work on the contacts and on our own political development. The main purpose of a good intervention is precisely to make contacts and recruit them to the organization. That is ultimately the gauge of our success.

As Trotsky explained to Fred Zeller:

"The Old Man added that one must not strain the comrades' nerves indefinitely. After each effort, we must catch our breath, get one's bearings, and renew one's energies. At the level of organisation, one must be methodical and precise, leaving nothing to chance:

"Whatever you do, set yourself an objective, even a very modest one, but strive to achieve it. Then elaborate a short- or long-term plan and apply it without weakening, with an iron hand. It is the only way to advance and for the whole organisation to make progress."

FINANCE RESOLUTION 2018

The International has over the past few years entered into a new period. This is true of the objective situation, with movements in Greece, Spain, France, Britain, Morocco, Brazil and the United States, just to name a few. It is also true subjectively where a number of sections have entered a positive dynamic of growth, which was not there before.

The youth is replenishing the ranks of the International and giving it the human resources needed to grow further and prepare for the tasks ahead. We must seize on this enthusiasm which pervades the organisation to strengthen the International, not just quantitatively, but qualitatively. That means first and foremost political education in the ideas and traditions of our movement. As part of this, it is necessary to educate the comrades in a correct approach to finance.

Finances are a necessary and important part of our work. It gives us the means to pay for full timers, premises, papers, books, leaflets etc. A serious attitude towards finance is the mark of a revolutionary organisation, and like all other aspects of the work it is a constant struggle that can never be treated in a routinist fashion.

There is a common prejudice among reformists and careerists that political activity should be free, that we shouldn't ask comrades and sympathisers to make financial sacrifices: "You're socialists, shouldn't you be giving that out for free?" In reality, of course, nothing comes for free under capitalism. Everything comes with a price tag, and the most serious workers and youth understand that, particularly once we explain it.

All tendencies that have a light-minded attitude towards finance end up with an opportunist approach in politics. Instead of raising their funds among the committed communist workers, the organisation would be forced to seek its funding from rich individuals or from the state. This was the case with the Mensheviks, and it is the case today among the reformists, as well as many sects and anarchists. Financial dependency inevitably becomes a political dependency.

In Denmark the sects have collapsed like a house of cards after the state decided to increase the threshold for the state youth and press funding just enough to make it impossible for the sects to make it. In Sweden the government is preparing to



do the same. In Italy, Rifondazione Comunista entered one unprincipled alliance after another in order to attempt to save the state funding which their apparatus depended on.

In 1912 the Mensheviks conducted a campaign of slanders among the German Social Democrats against the Bolsheviks. In answer to those, Lenin used the figures of the collections for the Bolshevik daily paper. He explained that the collections “form a fund and show of strength of the links of this or that group”. They indicate “the prestige of the groups, the confidence placed in them by the workers, and their actual influence on the proletarian masses” (“The Present Situation in the R.S.D.L.P.”, 1912). In the first six months of 1912, the Bolsheviks held 504 collections in 50 towns and cities, and the Mensheviks merely 15 in 5 towns and cities. These figures demonstrate the balance of forces between the two groups. The Bolsheviks were the more serious, the more determined and the more influential group.

As a revolutionary tendency we must depend on our comrades and sympathisers as part of their political commitment to the tendency. This means that we mustn't have a timid approach to finances. We must be open about our need for finance, and explain it politically. If we do not, it immediately poses the question whether we are serious about our work. It would appear as though we don't really believe in what we are saying.

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characters, particularly in the reformist milieu: petty bourgeois dilettantes who wanted to live a nice, cosy, well-paid life as a lawyer or a similar profession whilst paying lip service to revolutionary ideas. Trotsky didn't mince his words with such characters:

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Individuals of such character Trotsky considered fellow-travellers and he insisted that they should be made use of, but that they were not cadre material. Instead the party must chose as its leaders self-sacrificing individuals. The party must aim for those “for whom the idea of communism, once they are imbued with it, becomes the content of their entire life and activity.” (*Ibid*)

Our movement has been built on such individuals. When the Workers’ International League was formed in 1937-8, Ted Grant and the bulk of his comrades survived on unemployment benefits in order to dedicate themselves full-time to the organisation. They raised the money wherever they could, and the nine of them managed to scrape together enough to buy a printing press, publish their first paper, and a few pamphlets.

Similar stories exist from the US section of the 4th International around the same time. The section was built in those days by similar sacrifice. James P. Cannon details these sacrifices in *History of American Trotskyism*. He explains how worker comrades in Minneapolis used to bankroll the organisation, paying as much as five or ten dollars in subs every week (that’s between \$75 and \$300 in today’s money), and how a rent fund existed where comrades would lend their rent money to the organisation for a few days until the rent was due in order to pay some pressing bill, only to have a second comrade lend his rent money so the first could pay his rent, and so on. “Those were cruel and heavy times. We

survived them because we had faith in our program,” Cannon explained.

These are the kind of sacrifices that comrades have made in the past to build our movement, and the type of sacrifices that will be required of us in the future. All comrades must strive to become professional revolutionaries, to consider themselves to be at the service of the world revolution.

The money that we raise is needed to cover a multitude of different expenditure. The subs should first and foremost cover the basic regular expenditure of the section: wages of the full-timers, premises and international subs. If the organisation raises sufficient money to cover those essential regular expenditures with the subs, it can then use the fighting fund, which is more irregular, to cover expenses like travel, investments, printing of leaflets and posters. The paper and the bookshop should really be able to finance themselves, and bring in a surplus to help pay for the full timers.

Each section pays an international sub, of varying size, depending on the ability of the comrades in that section to pay. In the advanced capitalist countries, the monthly international sub is around €6 per month per comrade, and in other countries, significantly less. This pays for the international centre in London, including full-timers and the office. The international fighting fund, which we refer to as the development fund, covers trips by members of the International Secretariat and sometimes International Executive Committee (IEC) members to sections that cannot afford to pay such tickets themselves. It also covers



tickets by members of the IEC and guests to travel to world events such as IECs and World Congresses from countries where such expenditure would be unaffordable. Occasionally it also covers specific donations to sections.

The national and international centres are the political core of our organisation. But it is incorrect to conceive of them as primarily organisational bodies. They are the political leadership of our organisation, and to be able to strengthen the organisation politically we need the financial means to strengthen our national centres. The key role of the leading comrades is political. They need to prepare the organisation politically for the challenges that it faces. They need to educate and train up a new layer of Marxist cadres, through the production of material (be it written or audio-visual), lead-offs and personal discussion.

For this reason, we also need to bring leading comrades from the sections, be they full-timer or not, to international meetings to raise their political level and understanding through discussions with the other leading comrades internationally. This is the reason why the International spends a lot of money on trips. Modern technology is very helpful in conducting revolutionary work but it cannot replace physical meetings. None of this would be possible without the efforts of the comrades all over the world to raise money for their own section and the International.

In 1935, Trotsky offered the following advice to the young Fred Zeller:

“If you do not train good, serious administrators at every level of the movement, even if you are right a thousand times over, you will not win. What the Bolsheviks-Leninists have always lacked, particularly in France, are organisers, good treasurers, accurate accounts, and legible and well edited publications.” (“Fred Zeller’s recollections of Trotsky”, *In Defence of Marxism*, Issue 3)

As the organisation grows and expands, we need to train more comrades in the technical tasks involved in the building of the party. Having one good national treasurer is sufficient in an organisation of 20 or 30, but completely inadequate for an organisation of 100. Comrades with ability need to be identified and trained in tasks like keeping accounts, but also in how to explain finances in a political way. They need to understand how to connect the perspectives and needs of the organisation to the need for finance. At each stage of the development of the organisation, as our numbers increase, a new layer of finance organisers will need to be trained.

It is the leading comrades in the branches and nationally that need to set an example. In his polemics with one particular French comrade (“Paz”), Trotsky explained all the qualities that this particular comrade lacked, but were needed: “You can have revolutionaries both wise and ignorant, intelligent or mediocre. But you can’t have revolutionaries who lack the willingness to smash obstacles, who lack devotion and the spirit of sacrifice.” (“How revolutionaries are formed”, 1929) The argument



was over the question of a weekly paper, an enterprise the young comrades were prepared to undertake but the supposed leader, comrade Paz, always found excuses to postpone or not undertake. The young comrades, although not as well educated as Paz, had the will to build the organisation and make the necessary sacrifices.

In a critical remark about the US SWP, Trotsky complained that “We already have so many young bureaucrats in our movement.” He explained how the comrades didn’t rise to the challenges: “For example, the *Challenge* needs \$300. If they lack it, good, they wait. That is not the revolutionary way. It is a very opportunistic policy.” (“Financing the revolutionary movement”, 1938) He described this mentality as bourgeois. It finds a much more serious expression in trade union leaders who avoid strike action at all cost, in case it might cost them money or risk the state clamping down on their organisation.

We need to train our new and young comrades with a spirit of revolutionary sacrifice, through political explanation of perspectives and the needs of the organisation, and through leading by example. As Trotsky told Paz, “You begin, you set a good example, and then you make demands on others, because you have a right to make demands in the name of a common cause.” It is necessary to make demands on others. Like in other aspects of the work, the leading comrades cannot simply substitute themselves for the rest of the organisation, but set the example, and convince the other comrades to follow.

Raising finances starts with a political explanation, outlining why the money is needed and for what purpose. This means developing perspectives both for the objective situation and for the organisation, and explaining what, specifically, the money is for. This must be done every time the question of finance is raised, whether it’s in the branch, in a personal conversation about subs, or in a public meeting or in a written appeal. Then the treasurer and other leading comrades give as generously as they can possibly afford. Then they ask the other comrades, paying particular attention to those on a higher income, to follow their example. If the treasurer feels that comrades are not sufficiently forthcoming in such rounds, this should be discussed individually. After the members have made their contribution, sympathisers and periphery should be contacted.

All comrades have a responsibility to ensure that they keep up with their subs, that they pay them regularly on time. Regularity is of key importance. Without that, we won’t be able to pay our full timers and bills on time. Comrades also need to regularly reconsider their level of subs. In every intervention, thought must be given to whether it opens opportunities to raise finance, whether through the sale of materials, holding a collection, or selling food, drinks, etc. Some comrades will be able to contribute large amounts because they have well paid jobs, while others will have more spare time, which they can use to raise money from our periphery. By engaging creatively with the task, all comrades



can be involved in one way or another in the work of the finances.

Raising the question of finance with sympathisers and periphery fulfils two functions. It brings in money, but, if raised in a political manner, it also shows us who is more serious among our contacts and periphery, whether they are willing, as the expression goes, to put their money where their mouth is. Where we have built a base, comrades can also solicit donations and greetings from branches of the labour movement. If done well, it will strengthen the bond between the organisation and our periphery.

The branch is the starting point for this work. It is the role of the branch treasurer to keep a record of the subs of all the comrades in the branch, and keep abreast of the comrades' financial position. If comrades get a new job, a promotion, or in other ways have a change in their income, the treasurer must raise the question of the subs with them, asking whether this means that he or she can now afford a higher sub. This must, as in all cases, be combined with a political explanation of what the subs are for.

The branch treasurer, or fighting fund organiser if there is one, must also plan fund raising in the branch. They must take initiatives to raise funds, and encourage comrades to take their own initiatives.

The branch treasurer must keep meticulous accounts of the money that is spent and collected in by the branch. A slack attitude on the question of record keeping will sow doubts in the minds of comrades

and sympathisers as to whether or not the money is actually being spent on what it is raised for, and what is done with it. In all these tasks, the other leading comrades play a role in supporting the treasurer, particularly when it's an inexperienced comrade that has taken on the role.

The national and regional finance organisers must keep in regular touch with branch organisers to discuss subs levels, as well as fundraising initiatives. As part of that, they must give the branch organisers the necessary information. This includes details of the organisation's finances, what has been spent, what has been raised, how this relates to the budget and targets. This can be done partly in the form of circulars, but such circulars must be followed up with personal discussion. The branch organisers must then communicate this information to the branches on a regular basis, keeping comrades informed of the state of the organisation's finances.

The national treasurer and leadership are responsible for the organisation as a whole, and it is their responsibility to train up the finance organisers and discuss with them on a regular basis. Working targets must be set, and they must be targets that will push the organisation. If set too high, or not broken down and explained properly, a target will seem impossible to achieve, and will therefore have a discouraging effect. However, if the target is set too low, it can have the same effect. It could lower comrades' expectations. Comrades will not feel that their contribution is necessary in order to achieve the target, or that only a



small sacrifice is needed, when they would really be prepared to make a bigger one.

At international, national, regional events or aggregates, it is the responsibility of the leading comrades organising the event to ensure that a collection is held. The comrades should be notified in advance and someone should be appointed to hold an appeal. When conducting a subs campaign, comrades should also be asked to commit to raising their subs. This could be done by circulating a piece of paper asking each comrade to fill in their name, phone number and how much they are willing to raise their subs by.

All too often finances are treated as a routine question. Subs of comrades are left at the same level for several years, without a proper discussion. On the branch agenda finances become merely routine, passed over with minimal comment. The leading comrades must play a role in raising the question of finance on a regular basis, including giving reports on the finances of the organisation, as well as explaining, or reading out, those appeals for funds that are sent out. If this is done properly, comrades will better understand the organisation and its needs, feel more involved, and will therefore contribute more.

Comrades throughout the International must take a serious look at their financial situation and consider what extra steps they can take to raise more money. What personal sacrifices can the comrades make? Can they save money on drinks or cigarettes? Can they take a cheaper holiday? Or is there something else they can

save a bit of money on that they can use to raise their subs or give a one-off donation? Comrades also need to consider who can be approached for donations and what fundraising activities can be organised in the branches. As Trotsky points out, a revolutionary always find the means. There is money out there, the question is how to get to it.

In order to prepare for the period, we are entering, it is necessary to raise our finances to a higher level. The coming period presents great opportunities for the International, but it will require larger sacrifices from the comrades. We need to prepare ourselves by studying the history of our movement, and raising our political level. From this flow the inevitable conclusion that we must do everything in our power to build the IMT, and make the necessary financial sacrifices that flow from this.

July 28, 2018