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"THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

AND OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT"

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# THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT

by Richard Stephenson

"The party has only a minority of genuine factory workers...
The non-proletarian elements represent a very necessary yeast, and I believe that we can be proud of the good quality of these elements...But...our party can be inundated by non-proletarian elements and can even lose its revolutionary character. The task is naturally not to prevent the influx of intellectuals by artificial methods...but to orientate practically all the organization towards the factories, the strikes, the unions..."

"If we establish seriously such a general orientation and if we verified every week the practical results, we will avoid a great danger; namely, that the intellectuals and white collar workers might suppress the worker minority, condemn it to silence, transform the party into a very intelligent discussion club but absolutely not habitable for workers."

"I continue to be of the opinion that you have too many petty bourgeois boys and girls who are very good and devoted to the party, but who do not fully realize that their duty is not to discuss among themselves but to penetrate into the fresh milieu of workers."

-- Trotsky, "From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene" in <u>In Defense of Marxism</u>, pp. 135, 136, 140.

In making out guide lines for an attitude to international relations towards other Trotskyist organizations, it is unavoidable that we must take up at length the vexing problem of the Fourth International(s). This paper attempts to make out a thesis that the revolutionary international as conceived and founded during the life of Leon Trotsky no longer exists, and that all we have at present is a collection of disparate Trotskyist tendencies, completely divergent as to both national and international orientations, varying to an incredible degree in ideological presuppositions, a sad wreckage of a movement. Only by understanding the causes and process of this evolution can we come to take up a meaningful attitude towards the existing Trotskyist groupings, and unfortunately this necessitates a thorough (and in the most part boring) examination of the history of the last thirty years and how this movement as a whole has measured up to events.

## I. General Economic and Political Background

The <u>Trotskyist movement came into existence as a result of (and a conscious reaction against)</u> a succession of catastrophic defeats for the revolutionary movement on a global scale -- the <u>Stalinist</u> degeneration in Russia, the terrible defeat of the first Chinese and

Spanish revolutions, the triumph of Fascism in Europe and the Second World War. It was a time of general reaction and retreat of the working class movement, accompanied by a serious ideological crisis due to the naked betrayal of the existing leadership -- Social Democrat or Stalinist. Despite this, it is probable that if the Trotskyists had been given enough time and opportunity to put down deep roots in the working class movement, then some of the worst results of the general collapse might have been avoided, and some foundation laid down upon which to build in the future.

The Second World War ended with a world-wide upsurge in the revolution, but except in eastern Europe and the underdeveloped countries the overall result was disappointing. Stalin cooperated with the western powers in enabling them to stabilize what was a serious situation in France, Italy, etc., and the Communist parties themselves actively assisted in the task of post-war capitalist reconstruction. In England a Social-Democratic government eased the pressure by a policy of reform, and in other places (especially Greece) a complete counter-revolution was achieved with the aid of Stalin's foreknowledge and connivance. Up to the present (when there are signs that the revolutionary process is accelerating in Europe) what gains were made were only evident in the so-called "Third World", the underdeveloped countries. In the developed industrial nations capitalism seemed stronger than ever, and embarked upon a prolonged period of boom such as it has never experienced before. Cold War hysteria and reaction even further isolated the Trotskyists from the mass working class movement.

In economic terms the flow of capital to the underdeveloped countries which was such a prominent feature of the Imperialism analyzed by Lenin now gave way to a reaction in the opposite direction — an increasing flow of capital investment between the imperialist countries themselves, a process which, if anything, lessened the strategic importance of those areas snatched from imperialist control.

Despite these seemingly unfavorable general circumstances for the construction of an international revolutionary party, it is not sufficient for conscious socialists merely to blame exterior factors for the overall failure of their movement. As we shall see, opportunities of a secondary character did, in fact, arise, and advantage was not gained from them as it should have been. Though the Trotskyist movement in general may be quantitatively larger, its class composition is poorer, if anything, than it was in relative terms in Trotsky's own time; moreover, its organization and ideology are incredibly more splintered, and the calibre of its leadership is infinitely inferior.

# II. The Fourth International To the Death of Trotsky

It would be historically false to contrast the difficulties of the movement today with a mythical ideal in Trotsky's own lifetime. The International itself was founded on the assumption that the tasks of the age required an international revolutionary leadership, now that the Second (Social-Democrat) and Third (Communist) Internationals

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had so obviously demonstrated their bankruptcy. Yet the subjective factor was by no means encouraging. Though the International leadership contained communists of outstanding revolutionary record and ability, on the whole the class composition of the sections was not very inspiring. Before the SWP in America became the centre of activity, the French groupings were at the focal point of the affairs of the International Left Opposition (as it was then called), and its behaviour at that time only showed its weak and unstable character. Constant personalized inter-clique combats took place against a background atmosphere of a petty bourgeois discussion circle. Trotsky, increasingly exasperated with this, did not hesitate to describe the leadership as "Philistines," and went on to say that "I have been even in their homes and have felt the smell of their petty-bourgeois life -- my nose has not deceived me."

When he spoke in these terms, Trotsky was not using the words "petty-bourgeois" as a blind form of abuse as is used in left circles today. He was very aware of the class characteristics of this essentially unstable stratum, its weakness, vacillation, tendency to substitute ultra-left phrase-mongering for real revolutionary action, and the fact that as an intermediate formation between the primary classes it could serve as a transmission belt for bourgeois ideology, which would seriously affect the program of the movement and finally serve as a barrier between it and the proletariat. Events in his own lifetime and even more so since confirmed the essentially correct nature of his opinion.

It was with this in mind that the tactic of entry into the mass reformist organizations of the working class was designed -- to off-set the poor class content by recruiting workers and to focus attention upon the activity of the industrial proletariat and its politics. The tactic registered considerable gains in America and a relative success in France, but the danger of pressure from an alien class remained, and was all the more underlined at the beginning of the War when a large exodus of non-proletarian elements took place from the SWP (The Burnham/Shachtman split). Earlier degeneration of a different sort but on the same class base had brought forth Trotsky's condemnation upon R. Molinier and Pierre Frank -- a character whose later evolution underlined what Trotsky said about him at the time.

Further factors emphasized the weaknesses of the new International. It failed to retain the allegiance of some other outstanding anti-Stalinist militants (Nin, Sneevliet, Vereecken, Victor Serge, etc.), and the only grouping in the movement with a continuous tradition of hardened revolutionary activity (Poland) came out against the idea of a new International at all.

Nonetheless, a positive advance was made. The International managed to maintain its working-class orientation and ideology, and produced in the Transitional Program a statement which, if anything, was superior in clarity and theoretical presuppositions to the programs of any of the previous Internationals. Real and tangible

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gains began to be made -- in both Vietnam and Ceylon Trotskyists emerged as the leadership of the working class in crucial areas, and solid roots were laid for further expansion in Bolivia. In the countries of developed capitalism valuable experience was gained in the leading of strike actions in both Belgium and the U.S.A. by the beginning of the War. Things looked favourable for expansion and improvement in the future.

## III. The Impact of the Second World War

The declaration of war and the assassination of Trotsky not long after with the subsequent events struck the new organization with incredible force. The campaign of terror against it built up by the Stalinists before the war (which had already cost it some key figures) was now taken up on a far vaster scale and with greater efficiency by Nazi and Fascist governments. This had three parallel and equally damaging effects.

Firstly, valuable and <u>irreplaceable cadres</u> in both the national and international leaderships were physically <u>destroyed</u> -- including some of outstanding theoretical gifts (Abram Leon) and others noteworthy for their long record and experience in the revolutionary movement (Lesoil, Blasco, Pouliopoulos). Secondly, the <u>organizational apparatus</u> was severely mangled as a result of the fortunes of war. In actual fact it split into two completely separate parts -- the <u>International Secretariat</u>, located in Canada, and the <u>European Secretariat</u> which served those sections under Nazi or Fascist domination. There was no contact between them.

On the national plane the results were equally catastrophic. The French and British sections lasted most of the War in two pieces and the Greek Trotskyists even split into three, whilst the two biggest national groups (Ceylon and Vietnam) were both in two pieces each by the end of the fighting.

Thirdly, the War revealed the serious ideological degeneration which could affect sections with poor class content if they were put under stress. This normally took the form of capitulation to bourgeois nationalism, a result we would naturally expect with nonproletarian strata. The two French groups associated directly with the International (P.O.I. and C.C.I.) not only proposed a "united front to their own national bourgeoisie, but even in one instance went so far as to advocate entry work into the organizations of the Vichy regime. In Greece the results were nearly as bad, where one of the sections took up a state capitalist position (hence an abstentionist one in the U.S.S.R.-German conflict). The AK of the I.K.D. (German section) was so demoralized by the end of the War that it came up with the theory that the task of the International after the peace was to aid the reconstruction of bourgeois democracy -- precisely the same idea that the Stalinists were feeding to the working class to help capitalism in the West get over the economic and political crisis and restabilize itself.

All these factors exercised a cumulative effect upon an organization which, though finding its feet, was still fearfully weak and had not accumulated healthy traditions of struggle -- nor had it the time to train a new leadership capable of occupying the place of the older generation who had received their experience in the International in the days of Lenin and the old Bolsheviks. Those sections that had a healthy life were too isolated from the European groupings in the War, and even when contact was re-established those leaders who could act and speak with the authority of Trotsky preferred to stand back and allow others with inferior talents try to remedy the damage that was done.

## IV. The Post-War Reconstruction and the New Leadership

It would have been still possible to call a halt to the process of ideological dissolution if those groupings with a working class base or experience of other than purely propagandist activity had been willing or able to assert their influence. However, for a number of reasons this did not happen.

The RCP in England and the PCI in France had both been able to gain a decent (if small) base in the working class and a high relative class content, and by the end of the War were beginning to exhibit some healthy features. However, they had both been but recently formed as a coherent grouping, and neither of them carried sufficient weight in the International for a variety of reasons. leadership of the RCP had been denounced by the founding conference of the FI as "a nationalist grouping, in essence reactionary" when they had been in the WIL group and therefore technically outside the Trotskyist movement. Already the first Conference of the RCP had been the occasion of a slander campaign in International circles. and as time went on they fell increasingly foul of the new leadership, towards which they maintained an attitude (correctly, as it turned out) of accumulating suspicion. In the PCI's case they were still under a cloud as a result of the terrible mistakes made by both the constituent groups during the War, before the unification. Of the other sections of relative size and importance, the Bolivian, Ceylonese and Vietnamese groupings had grave problems of their own and in addition were too remote from the centre of administration and activity of the International even to maintain continuous contact, in some cases, let alone have much say in deciding policy. A damaging blow was struck against future possibilities in this direction when the comparatively large Vietnamese groups were practically physically destroyed through a division of labor between the French forces of reoccupation and the Vietminh. In this liquidation were included such renowned and long-established Trotskyist leaders as Ta Thu Thau, Tranh Van Thach and Tran dinh Minh, who had led the workers of Cochin China and Saigon when the Stalinists had abandoned them for a base in the peasantry.

Effectively then, the task of speaking for the solid and longestablished <u>Trotskyist traditions</u> inevitably <u>devolved on the SWP</u>. <u>Tragically</u>, it chose this juncture in time to <u>relapse into insularity</u> and self-sufficiency. Cannon, speaking many years afterwards about this period (when the damage had been done) had this to say:

"Our relations with the leadership in Europe at that time were relations of closest collaboration and support. There was general agreement between us. These were unknown men in our party. We helped to publicize the individual leaders, we commended them to our party members, and helped to build up their prestige. We did this first, because, as I said we had general agreement; and second, because we realized 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.

We went so far as to soft-pedal a lot of differences we had with them -- and I will mention here tonight some of the many differences, known for the most part only in our leading circles, that we have had in the course of the last seven years."

In fact, the SWP only broke with the "new leadership" when it moved directly against them in the U.S.A. itself by organizing a faction in their own party.

It is to this new (mis)leadership that we must now turn. Practically to a man they belonged to that younger and less experienced generation of theorists and ideologues who had taken over from the old cadres, several of which had been killed by the Nazis. They had thus emerged during the War itself and their experience was gained during the time of disintegration in Europe. A stable functioning European Secretariat was not even in existence until as late as 1943, due to the Nazi terror. M. Raptis (Pablo) became secretary, first of this body, then of the International when full world co-ordination was achieved in 1945. Along with the rest of the new team he set to work with the energy and ability characteristic of him in the task of "reconstructing" the movement. Neither their theoretical nor organizational methods were sufficient to measure up to the task.

Soon Pierre Frank also appeared, a rather shady character of pre-war vintage, and was accepted into the international leadership at the insistence of Pablo. Negotiations were re-opened with the Shachtman group in the U.S.A. and the P.O.U.M. in Spain -- all three of them roundly denounced by Trotsky before the War for their centrist and netit-bourgeois politics. That neither the affair of the P.O.U.M. nor that of Shachtman came to anything was not for want of trying. A fake "Italian Section" was constructed including a large proportion of Bordigists, who disapproved of the whole Trotskyist tradition and finally split away after consistently defying the International. An "Irish Section" turned out on later investigation to consist of one man, inactive for some time and a supporter of Shachtman's political opinions. In fact it is from this time that the

practice [began] of maintaining morale in the International by pointing to the (often imaginary) size of other sections which are too remote to make investigation of. This habit, once begun, from now on increased into a monster of truly Frankensteinian proportions. The other organizational peculiarities by means of which the new leaders maintained their hegemony in the International will occupy our attention in a later paragraph.

It had been accepted as axiomatic in the Trotskyist movement from the beginning that bad organizational practice is often a symptom of bad politics and theory. This had certainly been the case with the experience with Stalinism, and such also proved to be the case with the theoretical work of the new leadership. In this sphere there certainly were exceptionally difficult problems facing the movement by the end of the War and in the immediate post-war period, and it is not surprising that bad errors were made. However, it is the sign of a healthy organization in the Bolshevik tradition that an honest self-criticism and rectification is possible and the mistakes be learned from and corrected. It is significant of the state of affairs after the war that this was never honestly done, and thus the errors were compounded and made worse.

To be exact, some of the blame accrues to the more optimistic prophecies made by Trotsky himself before the War, but as all the great figures of scientific socialism were often guilty of anticipating the actual march of events in an incorrect way this fault need not have been as damaging as it proved, if the movement had been in a more healthy state. Isolated for the most part from the working-class movement, sadly battered by the cataclysmic impact of the world conflict, and bereft of their great founder and theorist, the Trotskyists were inclined to appeal from the living Trotsky of idea and action to the dead Trotsky of Biblical pronouncement. If the great man's ideological legacy had not already been converted from a method into a dogma (its opposite), then the failure of his immediate predictions would not have created the crisis of confidence that they did.

To begin with, the whole immediate post-war perspective was erroneous. Trotsky had foreseen a fearful slump and the end of the potential for bourgeois democracy. It is not surprising that he should have made a mistake even on this scale — in fact no one at all foresaw that western capitalism would then go on to enjoy the greatest and most pronounced boom it has ever experienced. Yet the Trotskyists were so impressed with the gravity of this prophecy that as late as two years after the war the majority — in the face of all the signs — still refused to believe that this was possible. The chief economic theoretician of the movement, E. Mandel (Germain), confidently maintained this line as against the RCP majority under the prompting of T. Cliff, who showed that this was contradicted by all the facts. It was similarly the case with Trotsky's opinion that the Stalinist bureaucracy would not survive the War — it would either be smashed by triumphant counter-revolution or be rooted out by the spread of the world revolution itself. This particular notion

was so sacred that it even led the SWP after the declaration of armistice to maintain that the War had not really ended, but was still continuing in some other mysterious form. In fact, Stalinism did not die and expanded its base with a further string of states stretching from Yugoslavia to China before the end of the decade — and capitalism itself seemed to be stronger, too, than everyone had believed.

The accumulated confusion created by all these circumstances was not faced by the International direction. Instead of analyzing the dynamics of the process actually in progress they clung to the old formula long after events had proved them ludicrous, then made good the mistakes with an essentially empirical and descriptive adaptation to what transpired long after it had happened and its meaning was plainly established. This abortion of the Marxist method was very demoralizing to some of the few excellent cadres that were left, and in what turned out to be a veritable intellectua exodus the Trotskyist movement lost some of its most honored figures and developing thinkers -- Albert Goldmann, Felix Morrow, Grandizo Munis, Natalia Trotsky, Tony Cliff, and other less known people; practically whole sections were hatcheted when they raised their voices with alternative theories and protested at the new politics. Further theoretical howlers only completed the process then begun -such as when the SWP pronounced that Mao was incapable of seizing power from Chiang even after the final victorious advance had begun, and when in a lunatic ultra-left binge it then went on to analyze McCarthyism as a Fascist movement, in defiance of all the facts and in the face of anything that could be remotely described as Marxist theory.

Thus in "reconstructing" the Fourth International the new mandarins finally destroyed its one sure and surviving asset -- the clarity of its program and its ability to make sense of political events of the day.

#### V. The New Ideology and Methods

When the theoretical leanings of the post-War leaders finally settled down, it was well towards the end of the 1940's. Initially, as we have seen, they treated the phenomenon of Stalinism with extreme sectarianism. For years they maintained that the Eastern European states were capitalist. To begin with, they tended to hold the view that the triumph of Mao in China was not likely. extent they were not really to blame for this error, since it was at least trying to come to grips with the phenomenon of Stalinism using as their starting point its essentially counter-revolutionary character as analyzed by Trotsky in the 20's and 30's, though applying the concept in a somewhat mechanical way. Unfortunately, when the sequence of actual events proved their opinion to be false, the new leaders then reacted too far the other way. The constant feature in the ideology of the "reconstructed" movement was its pronounced leanings in favor of Stalinism, a factor which had no small effect in encouraging the growth of state capitalist theories as a

reaction against it.

The first real sign of accommodation to Stalinism was the attitude adopted towards Yugoslavia. An open letter was written from the International Secretariat to the Yugoslav CP inviting it to join with the Trotskyists in forming a new "Leninist" International. Healy and Pablo were both to the fore in organizing work brigades to go there, and they even went to the lengths of contacting Yugoslav government officials and displaying Tito's portrait in their offices. All this seems to have been based on some such assumption that any CP opposition to the Kremlin must of necessity be from the left.

Apart from the fact that the Yugoslav CP has had a short way with Trotskyists in the past, the undeniable fact has been that Tito's opposition to Stalin was from the <u>right</u> -- balancing off between Moscow on one side and Washington on the other. This emerge from "neutrality" votes in the UN, Marshall Aid, joint capitalist/Yugoslav business companies, appearance of unemployment on the one hand and export of labor to West Germany on the other, etc. In supporting Tito against Stalin, what the International was in fact doing was precisely what Trotsky himself had refused to do in his own lifetime -- bloc with Bukharin against Stalin, a bloc of right and left against center.

That the Yugoslav business was not an isolated phenomenon was shown much later when the question of evaluating the Chinese regime came up. The news of the persecution of the Chinese Trotskyists was first hushed up, and then Healy had the temerity to accuse the Chinese section of sectarianism, because they had preferred to continue their work among the industrial proletariat instead of abandoning them for peasant guerilla warfare, as the Chinese CP had done (and come under Trotsky's scathing criticism for doing so). In fact, very little really constructive criticism of Mao's regime was attempted, thus sowing the illusions which have resulted in the present confusion over the "Cultural Revolution."

More recently, the treatment of Cuba by the United Secretariat seems to be laying the ground for a further repetition of the same mistakes. All the signs are present — recruitment for Cuban work holidays, printing and large scale dissemination of Castro's works, sycophantic descriptions of utopian life in Cuba (quaintly reminding us of the work produced on the Soviet Union in the thirties and Anna Louise Strong's drivel today), and finally, horror of horrors, the invention of a category of "unconscious Trotskyists" to take in members of the Cuban leadership.

It was some time before the ideology supporting this new turn in favor of Stalinism (but never of the U.S.S.R.) was articulated, and for a long time it rested merely by implication. Indeed, it can be said that it is not even clear today. At first sight it looks as if the International decided to back any dissident communist current, providing it was hostile to Moscow. However, from some indications it is possible to piece the process together. The first

sign of this was Pablo's theory of centuries of degenerated and deformed workers' states, which of course implied that we shelve the Trotskyist program towards them (revolutionary overthrow), at least for a hundred years or so! Lately the final end product of the evolution has been the ideas put out by Livio Maitan -- that "Stalinism" as a description of a social phenomenon is only correctly applied to Russia alone in Stalin's day (and not even for all of that) that Mao "brcke" with Stalinism (because he disregarded some of Stalin's directives), and further confusions. Finally (though it is not stated explicitly) it seems to be assumed that Stalinism always expresses itself in a right-wing form (class collaboration, reformism, peaceful coexistence), and that sectarianism, lunatic ultraleft phrasemongering, peasant socialism and guerilla warfare are not of the same kidney. Thus, Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism in its "third period" had been conveninetly forgotten, when most, if not all, of these ideological monstrosities first saw the light.

Stalinism as a phenomenon owes its origin to the impact of peasant (and petit bourgeois) pressure on a workers' revolution by backwardness and the failure of the spread of the revolution in the industrialized countries. In its accomodation to Social Democratic ideology and methods it also shows its petit bourgeois implications. It is not surprising that a movement of the class composition and leadership of the International after the War, in the conditions of extreme Cold War pressure and polarization, should have been forced It is all the more fortunate that it avoided to lean on Stalinism. being forced in the other direction -- towards the American bloc. But that it was forced at all shows its lack of stable roots in the industrial working class, and its dependence on a stratum which by its very intermediate position does not possess the stability to withstand this force. The net result is disaster. It is essential to its very nature that Trotskyism cannot accomodate to Stalinism without ceasing to be Trotskyist.

Nor were the other ideological innovations of the new leaders any more original than those treated above. As we have seen, the stabilization of capitalism after the War in temporary terms in the industrial countries meant that the results of the world revolutionary process were most evident for a time in the underdeveloped countries. These areas are of course not so strategic in the world economy, and imperialism could afford loss more readily here than in the countries with a high industry/agriculture ratio. The spread of neo-colonial types of control shows that world capitalism (with obvious exceptions) preferred this method of dealing with insurgent nationalism rather than hanging on directly in a suicidal way to the old colonial structures. In certain circumstances the colonialist powers were by no means militarily defeated at all when they withdrew their direct forms of rule (Britain in India, Cyprus, etc., and France in Algeria). This development was at first not understood by the new theoreticians, who were working with the pre-War economic model, and they tended to over-emphasize the importance of gains in the colonial world. This error in turn created another -- that the "epicenter" of world revolution had somehow come to rest in the underdeveloped world -- in direct contradiction to the theory

of Permanent Revolution, which stated that even the minimal gains of bourgeois democracy and national independance could only be assured in the present age (since 1917) by the conquest of power by the proletariat. In fact in no case in the colonial revolution did the working class lead the liberation struggle and then seize power, and those national revolutions which did survive did so only by assimilation to the economic forms and political control of the workers' states. Unfortunately, the International, using their inadequate perspective, then used it as a basis for mobilizing the support of its groupings in the developed countries in an all-out concentration on colonial revolution, first of all in Algeria, then This concentration away from those areas where the in Vietnam. working class existed in force cost the Trotskyist movement what few opportunities were presented in the crucial areas, and put it at a severe disadvantage when reintegration into the working class of those countries was on the order of the day -- as it has been in the past few years. It is impossible to orientate towards events in the colonial world and then suddenly expect to have roots in the industrial working class of the West when crisis appears.

The "Third-Worldism" of the International Secretariat (and later of the U.S.F.I.) cannot be kept separate from other ideologies which concentrate largely upon this sphere. Various stunted forms of Maoism have the perspective of surrounding the cities (i.e. the industrial West) with peasant guerilla warfare, an idea which is largely backed by the Tricontinental groupings and the New Left. All of these trends are a result of an impressionistic analysis of a mere 25 years in the world revolutionary process, and their petit-bourgeois class content and assumptions are only too evident. Not surprisingly, they have all also been influenced by Stalinism at one stage or another. The substantial agreement of the Trotskyist movement with them is really on the basis of a common class position, and that can hardly be described as proletarian.

The comparison becomes even more striking when we examine the notion of the efficacy of peasant guerilla warfare as an instrument of social change put forward by the majority opinion in the U.S.F.I. Far from being an invention of Chairman Mao or Fidel Castro, it was a result of a Comintern-imposed perspective of putschism in China in 1927/8, when the Chinese CP (before Mao was in command) had to flee from disaster in the cities and find refuge in the countryside. fact, guerilla warfare has nothing to do with the working class or its ideology, and is the time-honored method of peasant insurrection the world over -- from Wat Tyler through the German Peasant War to Pugachev in Russia and others. Especially has it been endemic in Its reimportation into the working-class movement in Stalin's "Third Period" is a classic example of Stalinism's method of leaning on alien classes and their traditions. Here again, as we have seen with the case of the other ideological innovations of the new leadership, the class basis is non-proletarian through the mediation of Stalinism.

The same is the case with the International's over-estimation of

radical and petit-bourgeois nationalism, both in the U.S.A. (Black Nationalism) and England (Welsh and Scottish Nationalism) as well as in the so-called "Third World." Sufficient warning against this new turn should have existed in Stalinism, which after all is a "national deviation in the working-class movement, but at least Trotskyists should have been capable of seeing the limitations of a "national" revolution for the construction of a workers' state. This did not prove to be the case. At one time Algeria was considered to possess a "workers' and peasants' government," and the ubiquitous Livio Maitan even set about the task of analyzing Egypt in terms of a "workers' state." Here again, even though it is the duty of any socialist to support movements of national liberation against imperialism, it is certainly not correct to sow illusions in the class character of the regimes created by them unless the working class has control over the state apparatus.

In the above analysis we have outlined what in our opinion is a clear degeneration of the Trotskyist movement in the direction of its petit-bourgeois class base, steadily over a number of years altering or laying aside its program of revolutionary proletarian activity as conceived by Trotsky. Though the process has been slow, its progress has none the less been relentless, and the results have been on the whole to produce a queer, eclectic imitation of Stalinism. therefore not surprising that of late it has gone so far as to question some of the fundamental assumptions of scientific socialism, with an attempt to rewrite class politics, and put out new analyses of the role of non-proletarian strata in class society. especially been the case with the "student vanguardist" theories of Mandel et al., where there has been a deliberate reassessment of an essentially petit-bourgeois sector, either by way of regarding it as really proletarian in embryo (whatever that may mean) or a new leadership, in and of itself, without organic contact with and direct reference to the politics of the working class. The old intelligentsia fulfilled its historic role by taking bourgeois science to the working class, but none of the founders and ideologists of Marxism (themselves from this stratum) ever considered it was their aim to keep their ideas to themselves, and take on a leadership role independent of the proletariat. The theory of the student vanguard, now showing signs of already falling into disfavor, is the most extreme example of evolution in the direction of bourgeois ideology.

The inevitable objection to the above analysis of the degeneration of the International is often given: did not the International have a perspective of entrism for the greater part of its post-war career? Was this not integration into the working class and its politics? Did not the leadership fight bitterly against those sections with a good class content (such as the RCP) which refused to undertake entry?

In fact this is far from true in its essentials. For years the International did indeed pretend to practice entry, but on the most ludicrous perspectives which could not expect to attract the sympathy of the working class. For the first years it did this with its

immediate post-war analysis: there is no time to construct a revolutionary party: we must enter the Communist and Social-Democratic parties to await the polarization when the inevitable slump appears. Then it argued for entry on a basis of petit-bourgeois hysteria and lunacy: the Third World War is round the corner, which will be followed by a revolutionary upsurge which the Stalinists will be forced to lead -- we must be in their party to influence the process. Finally, if centuries of deformed and degenerated workers' states are on the agenda, Trotskyists must enter the Communist parties, as their task will not be on the cards for a good many years or so!

When these grotesque contortions had been discarded, it turned out that for all the talk of entrism, when crisis struck the French working class movement, the PCI had really been doing entry work among the Communist students, out of which they constructed the JCR—precisely the class stratum it is possible to recruit openly and the very part of the population the entry tactic was not designed to influence. In England for a long period the International was at serious odds with the grouping which tried to work out the implications of its entry work in a serious manner.

The inevitable question has probably arisen by now: how was it possible to reorientate the Trotskyist movement away from its own original ideology in the direction of petit-bourgeois politics? What did the membership think of the amazing analytical results and zig-zags of its leadership? We shall see later that the leadership only managed to do this by a well-worked out methodology of bureaucratic manipulation, refusal to circulate documents, purge trials, rigged voting, and other undemocratic practice. This tended over the years to put the best sections (though not necessarily so) outside the International, since the leadership could only perpetuate itself on the basis of an uncritical and less conscious rank and file, ready to accept the new twists in policy when they were handed Any opposition was dealt with on a national level, or if it was serious, on an international one. We shall now go on to look at the usual ways in which this was done.

The new leadership after the War set to work with the most pressing item on its agenda as the reconstruction of the structure of the International. Though all that remained in hand for the most part was a collection of small groupings, a complete apparatus modeled on the Comintern was laid down, with plenums, international executive committees, secretariat — a full apparatus for an international on a supposedly democratic centralist basis. This is, of course, just workable if the politics are revolutionary proletarian ones. This was not the case, as we have seen, and this newly constructed apparatus was put at the disposal of an inexperienced leadership which used it to further its highly suspect politics. We must now turn to the organizational praxis as steadily worked out, and make comment on it.

One of the first clashes between the leadership and a substantial national grouping with a working class basis and content was the almost continual battle which went on between the leadership of

the RCP and the International Secretariat between 1945 and 1949. The formal question at issue was that of open party v entrism, but in fact the debate covered a wider range of topics which were to a close degree related. The RCP cast doubt (as we have seen) on the perspective of post-War slump and revolution, and was alone at the Second World Congress of 1946 in analyzing the new European structures in the Soviet zone as workers' states bureaucratically deformed. It opposed resolutely the capitulation to Titoism by the International Secretariat, but clung to the perspective of constructing the revolutionary party by means of open recruitment. The International leadership on the other hand was in favor of immediate entry, on the basis that a slump was about to take place which would radicalize the rank and file of the Labour Party and lead to a class polarization within it. As events have shown, this perspective was in deep error.

Realizing that the RCP would not back down on its position, a typical subterfuge was resorted to. Among the elements which had gone to make up the RCP at its founding Conference was a personal clique following of rather fluid politics grouped around the figure of G. Healy. (He admitted in the beginning that his sole inability to work with the Haston/Grant leadership was due to personal factors.) Cannon and Pablo encouraged this group by feeding it information and covert support, and of course it espoused the line of the International leadership. When the grouping had declared itself a faction Pablo produced his master card by allowing it equal representation with the majority on the IEC (a decision the majority were naive enought to agree with), thus cancelling out its vote, though the minority were outnumbered by four to one. The minority, confident of the International Secretariat's support, had threatened to go ahead and organize their entry work, should they not get a majority at the 1947 Congress. When the Secretariat predictably agreed, this in effect split the party with the approval of the International. The new group thus produced became the British Section when the majority, demoralized by constant fighting from both above and below, collapsed, and its secretary left the movement and its disillusioned cadres had to join the split group on its own terms.

The process now tested, it became the classic method for bringing into line any national section which disagreed with the orientation of the leadership. In the case of the majority of the PCI, also on a decent class basis, Pablo and Healy appeared in person at its congress, expelled it and recognized Pierre Frank's minority as the official section. This lost grouping became the present Lambertist tendency in France. When Healy and the SWP finally took up opposition to Pablo he failed in his time-honored method, and the pro-Pablo factions of Lawrence (in Britain) and Cochran (in the U.S.A.) were summarily dealt with before they could do much damage. Both Cannon and Healy had learned from the new organizational methods in the meantime.

Nor has this ludicrous and anti-democratic practice shown any

signs of abating. The IMG (now official section) was produced from the then section by a similar process -- a faction built up, split off, then given official recognition. In the case of the German section the minority, which supported the official line, was recognized, and the majority was not even allowed its editorial rights in the theoretical organ of the section, when over a year ago a serious factional battle erupted.

A much-favored method of the leadership is to restrict the circulation of dissident points of view, thus impeding the process of international discussion and avoiding a full airing of the issues. Thus at the last world congress of the U.S.F.I. there were three minority oppositional points of view -- and one which represented the view of the majority of the section. All of these national minorities had a practically identical criticism of the petit-bourgeois orientation of the leadership, yet their cases were dealt with (or in our case not even allowed representation in organizational "commissions" - Ceylon, Germany, Argentina, Britain) without them even being aware of each others' position. The least we can expect of an international is to circulate the material of its membership.

Weird and highly original as they appear, such organizational habits as these are not at all new. A cursory reading of any decent history of the Comintern or of one of its sections (such as Cannon's "First Ten Years of American Communism") will show abundant parallels in the life of the Third International during the height of its Stalinization. Here, again, as we have often noticed in our analysis of the ideology of the post-War leadership, the assimilation to Stalinist models is so striking as to be almost uncanny.

In this section, which has turned out to be longer than was hoped, we have attempted to trace the history of the ideological and organizational degeneration of the Fourth International. The conclusion is posed by the material itself: a movement with a revolutionary working class program but without working class content, contact and activity, is bound to alter its program and activity (if its class content is petit bourgeois), under the impact of outside forces, and the only way of correction is to review its theoretical assumptions in the light of the politics and activity of the industrial working class — the sole motor-force of socialist revolution.

#### VI. The Trotskyist Movement and the Test of Events, 1950-1970

It can easily be objected that the orientation of the world movement, since it has never been a mass force, cannot really be subjected to this sort of critique, since small groupings cannot influence the outcome of world-historical events. It is true that with the liquidation of the Greek and Vietnamese sections after the War only the Ceylonese (L.S.S.P., with 14 MP's in 1956) and the Bolivian (P.O.R. with 8 MP's in 1949) groups had anything like a mass base. However, a strict examination of events shows that the

movement did not even gain from the slight possibilities extended to it, and in some cases even actively mislead the forces for social change.

The first possibility for intervention presented itself in the Bolivian revolt of 1952 which installed a national democratic government under Paz Estenssoro, backed by a party of the radical petit bourgeoisie, the MNR. An embryo of dual power even emerged -- the Bolivian Workers' Centre (C.O.B.) together with armed militias independent of the ruling apparatus. Though the P.O.R. was still weak, it had a strong basis among the tin miners, and although the proletariat was a mere 10% of the population, this was roughly the same specific relative size that Lenin and Trotsky had encountered in Russia. But the P.O.R. did not act as the Bolsheviks had done towards their equivalent of the M.N.R.; instead it extended its critical support. Even though the "Fourth International" of Feb. 1953 had likened Paz Estenssoro to Kerensky (p. 15), the P.O.R. had contributed its share to reinforcing the illusions the masses had in the M.N.R., and in that way helped towards the defeat of the upsurge when reaction set in. All this was done despite the first criterion in the theory of "Permanent Revolution," which is that the national democratic bourgeois revolution is incapable of fulfilling even the most minimal tasks unless it is led by the working class and is fused with the proletarian revolution in the present period. Naively summing up the situation at this time, the anonymous article in "Fourth International" went on to say:

"The POR began by justifiably granting critical support to the MNR government.....The POR limits its <u>support</u> and sharpens its <u>criticism</u> insofar as the government proves itself incapable of fulfilling the national-democratic program of the revolution, insofar as it hesitates, capitulates, indirectly plays the game of imperialism and reaction, prepares to betray and for this reason tries to harry and deride the revolutionists."

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Far from being a "flexible attitude," this position of critical support to a national bourgeois government is precisely the position of Stalin and Kamenev in March 1917 in supporting the Provisional Government "in so far as it struggles against reaction or counter-revolution" (Trotsky, "History of the Russian Revolution", vol. I, p. 275). The parallel is so close as to be verbal. So are the politics.

A further opportunity of a less striking character was created as a result of the world crisis of Stalinism following the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. and the suppression of the Hungarian uprising. Here the International Secretariat had missed the bus before it left the garage by its talk of "centuries of deformed workers' states", which implied (inasmuch as it implied anything at all) that Stalinism had not exhausted its potential and thus must

still have a progressive role to play. The logical conclusion to this line of reasoning (which thank goodness was never drawn) is to conclude that revolts against it must of necessity be premature, and may even take on a reactionary character.

It was in England that the most valuable gains were made in the quality and number of capable intellectuals and industrial militant: who left the CP and joined forces with the Trotskyist movement to create the Socialist Labour League. However, the group they had joined was not renewed by the new talent accruing to it, for it was already too strongly set in intellectual aridity and bore the heavy stamp of its alternatively opportunist and sectarian behavior in the past. It was not long before many of the best recruits from Stalinism (which after all has always provided the best cadres for the Trotskyist movement) left, some of them en route to a right-wing home, heavily disillustioned with the fossilised lunacy they had encountered and complaining of the brutal physical and organizational treatment they had received in the process.

An equally golden opportunity (if not greater) was shortly afterwards presented to a rival strand of the Trotskyist movement by the Belgian General Strike. This was a reply by the industrial working class to the Loi Unique of the Eyskens government, which proposed to pass onto the proletariat the weight of modernizing Belgian capitalism by putting up purchase tax and drastically reducing social expenditure. The leadership of this strike was largely in the hands of Andre Renard, a man who had cooperated with E. Mandel to found the weekly "La Gauche". The tendency aroun Mandel did not sufficiently disassociate itself from Renard's politics either at the time, when he seems to have led the strike into a blind alley, nor 4 months later when he side-tracked the working class into nationalist divisions by setting up his Walloon Popular Movement. Mandel himself then went on to declare his support to the federalist principle. Thus the position during the strike (which bears a marked resemblance to that of the CPGB during the British General Strike of 1926) and that on the national question both consisted in tail-ending the left-social democratic and petit-bourgeois leadership. We would venture to suggest that a clear Trotskyist position would have had great possibilities during a situation such as a general strike in one of the most developed industrial countries of Western Europe.

However, it was the progress of the Algerian Revolution that showed just how far from real Trotskyist positions the various groupings were. The SLL-OCI bloc had already compromised themselves in the face of events by their pronounced and deliberate campaigning on behalf of the MNA, which in view of its final evolution could not but alienate the activists of the movement in Algeria. The International Secretariat in the process of becoming the "United Secretariat" by the adhesion of those groups around the SWP committed just as grave a mistake. It analyzed the Ben Bella government as a "workers' and peasants' government", and the secretary of the International, M. Raptis (Pablo) even became an

official in it, thus accepting governmental responsibility for the politics of a regime sitting on top of a non-working class structure. When the inevitable reaction set in Pablo narrowly escaped sharing the fate of others apprehended by the counter-revolutionary coup of Boumedienne. This was repeat of the politics adopted during the Bolivian upsurge -- with a vengeance!

A further blow to the movement as a whole followed quickly upon this in the decision of the Ceylonese section, the L.S.S.P., to take part in a governmental coalition with the party of the peasantry and the radical petit-bourgeoisie, the SLFP. To its credit, the International movement broke off relations with the party, but the capitulation had come as a shock to the movement as a whole, which was largely unprepared for it and had been nourished through all its disappointments by glowing stories of the size, influence and activity of its Ceylonese grouping. When the balance-sheet was finally drawn, it was revealed that despite its wide electoral and trade union support in the working class the Party had in fact consisted of no more than 1,000 fully-enrolled members, and its leadership was vested in a grouping of Westerntrained intellectuals, several of them belonging to the very richest strata in the population. With a structure like this and the benefit of the misleadership of the International it is not surprising that the result was almost unmitigated disaster. influence of Trotskyism in Ceylon is now at an all time low, as a result of a vote of the only remaining 2 Trotskyist MP's, a vote which added to the right wing brought about the fall of the SLFP/ LSSP government and heralded into power the return of the reactionary UNP. There are now 4 groups in Ceylon claiming the mantle of Leon Trotsky, of which the worst, formally adhering to the USFI, is steadily gaining a reputation for scabbing in the working-class movement.

It was not until 1968 that events of a really deep-going nature have given us the material to test the ability of Trotskyism in the West to react to more favorable circumstances. The result of this most decisive test of events (France '68) was horrifying. Those groups which had at least retained a working class orientation of sorts (the Union Communiste and the OCI), and had not written off the working class of the advanced countries in favor of "Third Worldism" were frankly caught unawares. The OCI was stupid enough to call upon the students to leave the barricades during the crucial battles, and the Union Communiste (Voix Ouvriere) tried to outbid the CP by calling for a larger wage rise -- a cry raised initially by the CP to escape from the embarassing political implications of the strike. On the other hand, those tendencies which had spent the last twenty years talking about the colonial epicentre of world revolution (the PCI/JCR and the Pablo group) now began to sow illusions in the "new student vanguard." The result of this was mass meetings in the Sorbonne (visited by a few striking workers out of curiousity) and adventuristic attacks on public buildings, at a time when nearly 10,000,000 workers were engaged in an overtly political strike against the government. The

Trotskyist tendencies (with the sensible exception of the Lambert group) then proceeded to field their own candidate in the elections which followed or even call upon the working class to abstain.

It is typical of the movement as we have analyzed it that when the spectre of revolution again returns to Western Europe, the preliminary radicalization of the petit-bourgeoisie (which quite often accompanies working class upsurge) should be misinterpreted as the revolutionary vanguard. It is also typical of the other strains in the Trotskyist tradition as we have it to come out with an essentially reformist answer to the working class in crisis. We must take note if we are not in this country to make the same errors as were made by our French comrades.

#### VII. The Trotskyist Movement as It is Now

With the preliminary background as outlined above it is easy to see how the movement today is in so many fragments. At each twist and turn of the leadership there have been those groups and individuals who have raised their voice in protest, then left or been thrown out of the structures. Thus an examination of the various Trotskyist groups tends to look like a museum of the past history and mistakes of the Fourth International. The group which now puts out "Lutte Ouvriere" in France (ex. Union Communiste-Voix Ouvriere) left the International as far back as October 1939 when it realized that the French section was never going to build anything in the working class, let alone a revolutionary party. It tends to hold assumptions regarding the Stalinized countries like those held by the whole International just after the War. All the new state structures-with the exception of the Soviet Union-are capitalist.

Apart from the plethora of small groups created by the destruction of the RCP, the next big grouping to be created was the Lambert current in France (then under slightly different leadership), which came into being as a result of Pablo's purge of the majority of the This was shortly afterwards joined by the Healy group in England and those groups around the SWP in the U.S.A. to form the "International Committee of the Fourth International." The main ideological divergence here initially was over the question of centuries of deformed workers' states, though the critique of the International Secretariat was deepened in an analysis of "Pabloite Revisionism." Unfortunately, those groups which put down the degeneration of the International to this particular disease had been deeply involved in promoting it, as we have seen. they not spoken up against Pablo, Germain et al. during the period between 1945 and 1953, but had rather on the contrary supported their activities? Thus the critique developed by the International Committee, whilst excellent up to a point, stopped too far short to analyze the deep-going reasons for the degeneration of the International, since to do this would mean a rigorous and honest selfcriticism of their own role in the years preceding the split. characteristically non-Bolshevik manner they refused to do this, thus they were not able to lay down solid guidelines to repair the

damage already done.

Apart from the SWP and its associated groups, which rejoined the International Secretariat to form the "United Secretariat" in 1963, the International Committee substantially still exists. Its politics tend to be on the sectarian side, though they are usually superior to those of the "United Secretariat," if only because they split off before the former had gone quite so far on the road of petit-bourgeois degeneration.

The next split of some dimensions was that of the groups around Posadas, mostly based in Latin America, which left the International Secretariat in the early 60's. Though now dismissed rightly as lunatics because of their ideas on the desirability of a nuclear war, we must not forget that their theories are only a logical extension of the position taken in the early fifties on the likelihood of a Third World War by the entire Trotskyist movement. Here again we have the remarkable phenomenon of one of the past political errors of the movement still existing in frozen fossilization, enshrined in a small sectarian grouping.

Passing over smaller splits (such as the Spartacist Group in the U.S.A., produced when the SWP rejoined the I.S., but which did not join the I.C.), the next international tendency to leave was that of Pablo himself (mostly located in France, the Arab countries and Australia), calling itself the "Revolutionary Marxist Tendency of the Fourth International." This grouping represents the politics of the U.S.F.I. taken to their logical conclusion, being even more liquidationist than the U.S.F.I. towards Cuba, Black Power, the student struggle, etc., whilst looking towards Yugoslavia rather than China as the more healthy tendency in the International Communist Movement. It is amazing that Pablo summarizes his attitude towards the rest of the movement as "a dead past without a future," since he above all was responsible for making up the corpse to pretend that it was still living. Its critique of the U.S.F.I. tends to miss the point altogether, loudly complaining that the latter still refuses to put forward a transitional program for students.

Finally, we have the rash of small groups created as a result of the decisions of the last World Congress of the U.S.F.I., ourselves included (Germany, Argentina, Ceylon, England). These at least are not keeping up the tradition of make-believe by pretending that they are a "Fourth International," and all have to a certain extent the same critique of the petit-bourgeois orientation of the U.S.F.I., together with the need for a turn towards the working class. Unfortunately, contact between the groups is practically non-existent, as a result of the usual organizational manipulations of the leadership. It is only since leaving, in fact, that they have even become aware of each others' existence.

The net result of the process of international disintegration is that in practically every country that has ever had Trotskyists

in it there exist a number of rival groupings, differing widely in politics and all assuming the mantle of Trotsky, often even calling themselves "Fourth International." Below is a comparative table to illustrate this fractionalization:

Country	No. of Groups	Country	No. of Groups
Great Britain	10 (+?)	Spain	3
France	7 (+?)	Greece	4
Germany	3	Australia	2
Ceylon	4	India	3
Argentina	5	Japan	2 (+?)
Bolivia	2	Mexico	3
U.S.A.	4	Peru	3 (+?)

Naturally, the figures given here are the lowest, since allowance must be made for groupings whose existence is not open to investigation from overseas.

#### VIII. What Our Attitude Should Be

Obviously, the first conclusion that comes out of the above is that the Fourth International no longer exists, not merely in an organizational sense but programmatically, since the Transitional Program itself has often either been discarded or revised in the direction of petit-bourgeois ideology. Yet no one can be a Trotskyis in one country, despite the fact that we must admit we shall probabl not get complete agreement even as regards essentials with groups overseas. We are bound therefore at least to seek some links, exchange information and viewpoints, etc., and try to work towards a common understanding. A good beginning would be at the very least to publish an organ (say about twice or more a year) putting forward the views of those groups with which we are in substantial agreement but which have no opportunity to be heard here because of lack of International links.

The question immediately poses itself in this context: which groups should we regard in a fraternal light, and which should we consider as useless for our purposes?

As we have seen, the history of the International itself gives us the answer. Although the present groupings of any importance have elements of both sectarianism and opportunism mixed together in their ideology, it is possible to sort them out into two more or less clear categories:

a) The traditional, often sectarian groupings, most of which have existed in isolation from the mainstream of the Trotskyist movement for some time, but despite their sectarian features and past errors of a serious nature, have at least refused to question the basic premise of socialism, viz., that the working class of the metropolitan countries is the fundamental motor

force of social change, and that it should remain the object of Trotskyist activity. These groups (such as the SLL, OCI, Lutte Ouvriere, Spartacist groups in both the U.S.A. and Germany, Marcus group in the U.S.A.) also include those in the underdeveloped world which reject the emphasis on peasant socialism and guerilla warfare as a method of social change and concentrate rather on the leading role of the working class in these countries (Karlo and Edmond Groups in Ceylon, Argentinian group, etc.). Especially important for us in this category are those groupings which came into being at the same time as our own group (the German group), also those groups which share our analysis that the Fourth International has been destroyed and needs to be rebuilt from fundamentals (Lutte Ouvriere and the American Spartacists), and more important than the rest, those groups which still regard entrism as a viable method of constructing the revolutionary party of the working class (one Ceylonese group, the Irish "League for a Workers' Republic" (?), the new Canadian group, the other English groups).

Those groupings on the whole opportunist and third worldist in their outlook, which have made the most concessions to petit-bourgeois pressures -- student vanguardism. peasant socialism, guerilla warfare, black power, pro-Cuban (and Yugoslav and Chinese) ideologies. These groupings (including the USFI, Pablo's RMTFI, the Voix Communiste group in France) have over the years mixed together a queer amalgam of Trotskyist and "New Left" ideologies, and though they disclaim a desertion of the working class movement, have never put much effort into the working in it and have consciously orientated away from it. Whilst these groups contain intellectuals of outstanding ability from whom it is always possible to learn something (Mandel, Pablo, Denis Berger), they really belong to a tradition which has steadily over the years departed completely from the aims and methods of the pre-War Fourth International. Here again we must not make arid generalizations, but distinguish between those in these set-ups (such as Peng Shu-tse in the USFI) who are aware that something fundamental is wrong, and those who go on cheerfully propagating the myth that the Fourth International still exists -- in their own persons, of course.

In summary I think we should adopt as our policy in this sphere the call to support any serious attempt in the International movement "FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ON THE BASIS OF WORKING CLASS ACTIVITY ON A PROGRAM OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM." As can be seen, this is too monstrous to be a slogan, but it sums up roughly what we are trying to do.