

Open Letter to the International Socialists From Cliff to Trotsky

The following letter was distributed at a national gathering of the Canadian International Socialists in Toronto.

1 May 1998

Dear comrades,

I was an active member of the IS for three years (September 1994 to December 1997), but I am no longer a member of your organization. I think I owe it to IS comrades to explain my differences. I hope you will seriously consider what I have to say.

I was expelled by Abbie Bakan on December 10, 1997 for allegedly “infiltrating” the International Socialists (IS) on behalf of the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) and the Trotskyist League of Canada (TL). The allegation is an obvious lie—anyone who knows anything about the IBT and the TL knows that they are competing organizations. Even if I wanted to “infiltrate” the IS, which of course I didn’t, it would be impossible to do so on behalf of both of these groups.

This does not mean that I did not develop differences with the IS on several critical issues. However, I did not have sinister motives. In the period from when I began to develop some serious differences until I was expelled, I carried out all my responsibilities as a full member of the organization—attending paper sales and meetings, as well as paying dues. I did resign my post as Fredericton branch convenor, which I think was the honorable thing to do, given my growing doubts about much of the group’s basic political orientation. I also corresponded with the IBT and TL, a fact I did not try to conceal. In a phone conversation with Carolyn Egan in mid-November, I asked if this was acceptable to the IS. She said it was acceptable and that the IS didn’t want to lose me. When I was expelled, Abbie’s ultimatum was that if I continued talking to the IBT or TL, I would no longer be a member of the organization. This is consistent with the IS policy of sealing its members off from political competition. It was likely that I would have left the IS at some point, but it should have been on my own terms.

The Political Period

The IS characterizes the era that we are living through as one of “economic instability and political volatility.” This is generally correct, but it leaves out a lot. Globally the capitalists have been on the offensive for the past decade. This primarily results from their victory in the “Cold War” over the USSR which strengthened U.S. imperialism and its allies. The existence of the Soviet Union as a counterweight to the NATO imperialists strengthened the hand of various nationalists in their conflicts with imperialism and played a key role in the defeats of imperialism in China, Cuba and Vietnam. One of the first fruits of the disintegration of the USSR under Gorbachev was the crushing of Iraq in the murderous 1991 Desert Storm attack. The ultimate collapse of the Soviet bloc led directly to a series of major concessions and retreats by leftist forces globally, e.g., South Africa, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Of course history did not come to an end when the Stalinist regimes did—the working class has continued to

struggle. But we must recognize that the recent significant struggles (Ontario, France, South Korea) have had a defensive character and that generally the level of political consciousness is far behind the level of struggle. The consciousness of the proletariat has been *lowered*, not raised, by the destruction of the Soviet Union (which, while it was not genuinely socialist, was correctly seen by many workers as having an economy that, since 1917, had operated outside the dictates of global capitalism). One consequence of the imperialist victory in the Cold War is that the word “socialism” has been temporarily erased from the vocabulary of many in the workers’ movement. The capitalists have also concluded that socialism is dead—which is one reason they are being so aggressive about take backs. Particularly in Western Europe after World War II, the capitalists made important concessions in terms of the social wage because they wanted to undercut the appeal of “socialist” East Europe.

The IS leadership says that there are “deep pools of bitterness.” Yes there are, but so what? Bitterness does not equal class consciousness. Unemployed German workers joined the Nazis in the 1930s because they were bitter. *Socialist Worker* noted that many workers, embittered by Bob Rae’s NDP government in Ontario, turned around and voted for the capitalist parties.

Lenin said that class struggle does not automatically produce revolutionary consciousness. Those who don’t understand this always tend to overestimate (and tail) existing movements in the class, and downplay the party question and the need for revolutionaries to fight for leadership. Lenin called this tendency “economism.” If the working class is revolutionary in itself, it doesn’t need a party to lead it.

The working class, through its own struggles for existence, can only achieve *trade-union consciousness*—a form of *bourgeois ideology*. This is because working class struggle tends to be sectional and national. The role of the vanguard party is to bring *political class consciousness* (an understanding of history, of the various social classes and oppressed groupings in society and of the common interest shared by workers internationally) to the most advanced workers from outside the framework of their own immediate experience:

“We have said that *there could not have been* Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc.

“...the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine ‘class struggle’ until this struggle is led by a strong organization of revolutionaries.”

—V.I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (1902)

The initial members of a communist movement will naturally come to revolutionary politics as intellectuals (Marx,



DAVID KING

'... the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory'—V.I. Lenin

Engels, Lenin and Trotsky all came from such backgrounds). Life on the shop floor may give workers a gut-level hatred of their boss, but it does not automatically give them an understanding of the operation of the capitalist system as a whole. This does not mean that workers cannot become Marxist revolutionaries, but to do so requires investigation independent of their own work experience.

The Party Question

An unbalanced view of the state of the class struggle leads the IS to overestimate the possibilities for the left in general and itself in particular. This has produced a recruitment policy that was best summed up by Alex Callinicos of the British Socialist Workers Party as: "If it walks, sell it the paper; if it buys the paper, recruit it." There is an amazing contradiction between this definition of membership and the IS claim to be building a Leninist vanguard. The "open recruitment" policy, apart from anything else, makes the IS extremely vulnerable to infiltration by fascists and the state.

In the 1903 Bolshevik/Menshevik split over the criteria for membership, what side would the IS really be on? In his 1959 book, *Rosa Luxemburg*, Tony Cliff, founder of the IS tendency, wrote: "for Marxists, in advanced industrial countries, Lenin's original position can much less serve as a guide than Rosa Luxemburg's..." This statement was edited out of further editions of the book, but it shows that the party question is not a question of principle for the IS, but one that changes according to the historical juncture. Luxemburg herself came to recognize that Lenin had been right against her on the necessity for a revolutionary vanguard party, as opposed to an all-inclusive "party of the whole class." ISers—Lenin argued for a high commitment to politics and activity as a criterion for member-

ship—agreed? Now take a look at your branch membership list. 'Nuff said.

Leon Trotsky, leader of the Russian Revolution and founder of the Red Army, opened the *Transitional Program* with the lines: "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat" (*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, 1938). The party question is the central one for revolutionaries.

A real revolutionary group must be made up of serious people, committed to the revolutionary program. This defines the membership of a Leninist group. But in the IS you can be a lot of things—a feminist, a social democrat or an anarchist. These are all forms of bourgeois consciousness. It is the task of Marxists to argue with people like this, to win them away from such illusions—not to recruit them as they are and thereby dilute the organization. To feminists, we say, "draw a class line, not a sex line;" to social democrats, we say, "you have to break the power of the bourgeois state;" to anarchists, we say, "the proletariat needs a state to defend its revolution." Only those who reject feminism, social democracy or anarchism, and embrace Marxism, can be recruited. If you started a rock-climbing club, would you let people join who thought you should go scuba-diving instead? The IS has too many people going in too many different directions. As a whole, they have no direction. This is what Lenin had to say about those who put artificial unity over political principle:

"We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not of retreating into the neighbouring marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very

outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now some among us begin to cry out: Let us go into the marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: What backward people you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the liberty to invite you to take a better road! Oh, yes, gentlemen! You are free not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render *you* every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, don't clutch at us and don't besmirch the grand word freedom, for we too are 'free' to go where we please, free to fight not only against the marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh!"

—*What Is To Be Done?*

Chris Harman of the British SWP referred to Lenin's analogy to explain the kinds of problems that arise with low-level recruitment:

"The revolutionary party exists so as to make it possible for the most conscious and militant workers and intellectuals to engage in scientific discussion as a prelude to concerted and cohesive action. This is not possible without general participation in party activities. This requires clarity and precision in argument combined with organizational decisiveness. The alternative is the 'marsh'—where elements motivated by scientific precision are so mixed up with those who are irremediably confused as to prevent any decisive action, effectively allowing the most backward to lead. The discipline necessary for such a debate is the discipline of those who have 'combined by a freely adopted decision.' Unless the party has clear boundaries and unless it is coherent enough to implement decisions, discussion over its decisions, far from being 'free,' is pointless."

—"Party and Class," 1969

The IS leaders will say that refusing to recruit people who don't understand or agree with your program is a characteristic of "small group mentality" and is "sectarianism." They will deny that the IS is accommodationist and claim that if you don't recruit new youth as soon as you meet them you will never see them again. But if there really is a radicalization, won't people show up more than once? Why sign up people who aren't really interested or committed when you know that in a few weeks or a month they will drift off? The constant turnover produced by the "Open Recruitment" policy has produced a less political organization and an overall lowering of the level of the membership.

An organization built in this way is doomed either to be bypassed by great events or to betray. One of the main reasons the Second International supported their own rulers in the First World War was because they built a "broad" inclusive organization on lowest common denominator (that is, reformist) politics. This ensured that at critical moments they could not offer decisive revolutionary leadership to the working class. The IS leadership knows this history, but is incapable of drawing the operational conclusions. When people criticize this policy, the response they get is that they are "self-important" and that they should get busy recruiting.

The priority of revolutionaries must be to forge a politically principled *vanguard* of the working class. In periods in which the working class is not on the offensive, small revolutionary groups that make "growth" their top priority



AFP-DPA

Kim Dae Jung: IS choice for South Korean president

must politically adapt to the existing (bourgeois) consciousness of the class. Such groups can *never* lead a working-class revolution.

'Don't Bomb Iraq' or 'Defend Iraq'?

Being a revolutionary is not easy. It means saying unpopular things a lot of the time, but the task of revolutionaries is to "say what is." You have to raise a revolutionary program to be able to win people to revolutionary politics. In 1915, the Bolsheviks said "Turn the Guns Around!" It was unpopular, and people hated them for it, but they kept on saying it because it was correct. By 1917, when the brutalized, impoverished, war-weary Russian proletariat understood that the Bolsheviks had told them the truth there was a mass radicalization that turned the Bolsheviks into a mass party and led directly to the October Revolution.

In the 1991 Gulf War the IS abandoned the Leninist position of military defense of Iraq so that they could enter anti-war coalitions with their left-liberal milieu. Because of their lack of political principles, they would not distinguish between an imperialist power and an imperialist victim (Iraq). In the recent Gulf crisis, the slogan of the British SWP was "Don't Bomb Iraq." Does this mean that it is okay to starve Iraq as an alternative; is it okay for the U.S. imperialists to use diplomatic pressure? It is bad enough to tail behind progressive movements, but don't tail France, Russia and Saudi Arabia. The IS, in this case, bowed to the pressure of bourgeois ideology.

Opportunism & NDP Loyalism

IS opportunism is clearly displayed in Canada by the perpetual call for a vote to the New Democratic Party (in



TORONTO STAR

Bob Rae: NDP union-bashing premier of Ontario

Britain it is the Labour Party). This is explained by referring to Lenin's tactic of critical support. But in the early 1920s, when Lenin advanced this tactic, there was a wide layer of militant workers following the recently created Labour Party. Since it hadn't been in government, and claimed to be a workers' party committed to socialism, many advanced elements of the working class had deep illusions in it. Lenin's proposal was designed to help put Labour into office to expose its real pro-capitalist character and shatter the illusions of the workers who supported it.

Lenin also proposed that the Communist Party should seek to organizationally affiliate with the Labour Party. How different the situation is today! The NDP and New Labour retain a connection to the union bureaucracy, but they do not even pretend to run on a working-class program. They are very clear that capitalism has nothing to fear with them in power—as they have proven time and again.

The task of revolutionaries is to break illusions. But for supposed Marxists to call for voting for the social democrats when they run on an overtly pro-capitalist program and point to their record of union-bashing and attacks on the poor and oppressed can only *create* illusions.

The treatment of the NDP in the internal bulletin released prior to last year's election (April 23 1997) notes that in Ontario the labor bureaucracy had pulled back from confrontations with the Mike Harris government in order to campaign for the NDP: "Union militants are expected to re-

place their picket signs with lawn signs." The document goes on:

"we have to be the memory of the class. In the middle of the Bob Rae years of despair, when thousands were leaving the party, we argued against the stream to still vote for the NDP. Our vote for the NDP has nothing to do with its record. It is the only party that is based on the union movement and not the corporations. We know it will sell-out."

This is an astounding statement, when you think of it. Firstly because the IS almost never goes "against the stream." But secondly because it so brazenly admits that its electoral support to the NDP has nothing to do with the existence of illusions of the workers, but merely the fact that it is connected to the labor bureaucrats. The NDP is so far to the right that it cannot really be accused of "selling out"—it *runs on its record* of blatantly attacking workers, and the IS calls for electing it! The Steering Committee document continues:

"We were criticized by people like Jack Layton [a prominent left-NDP municipal politician in Toronto] for taking this position [i.e., voting NDP]. Their support to the NDP is based on illusions that the NDP will make a difference. When they saw the NDP implement Tory cuts, they abandoned the party."

Bob Rae's government was so hated by working class people for acting like Tories that Layton wanted to get some distance from it. But not the IS leadership! Apparently without seeing the obvious contradiction, the leadership document goes on to quote Lenin's famous comment on critical support:

"I want to support [the Labour Party] in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man—that the impending establishment of the government of the [Labour Party] will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will hasten the political death of the [Labour Party]...."

—"Left-Wing" *Communism—An Infantile Disorder*

The NDP in power had hung itself—the best elements in its base were melting away. Yet *still* the IS supported the social democrats. This is *exactly the opposite* of what Lenin advocated. Instead of seeking to rally some of the thousands of workers who were deserting the NDP in disgust at its betrayals, and direct them to the left into supporting independent labor candidates against NDPers who backed the hated Social Contract, *Socialist Worker* used its credentials to try to corral left-wing voters for Rae.

The confusion of the IS policy on the NDP is perhaps best summed up by the Steering Committee in the following:

"So we call for a vote to the NDP. But we do not support the NDP. We organize a revolutionary socialist organization that is an opponent of the NDP's, whose goal it is to replace it. We vote for the NDP, but we do not campaign for them or join the party."

If the NDP (or Tony Blair's Labour Party in Britain) was worth voting for, *if* it commanded the allegiance of a sizeable number of socialist-minded workers who had illusions in it, *then* it would make sense to campaign for it, or perhaps even affiliate to it, in order to make contact with and influence that layer of militants. But when there is no such layer because the social democracy is so nakedly pro-capitalist, then there is no reason for revolutionaries to call for militant workers to vote for it. In fact, by doing so, Marxists can actually help create illusions among leftist



U.S. ARCHIVES

Seoul students enthusiastically greet North Koreans, summer 1950

workers that there is some reason to still vote NDP.

Of course the IS likes to present its votes to the NDP and Labour Party as a “class vote” against the bosses’ parties. But that is revealed as just so much cynical doubletalk by the fact that the IS internationally is also willing to call for votes to openly bourgeois parties—such as the South Africa’s African National Congress in 1994 and South Korean presidential candidate Kim Dae Jung in 1987. Despite all the fine talk about working-class independence, the IS bottom line is always determined by popularity.

Those who don’t believe that the working class can be won to Marxism through the intervention of socialists putting forward a revolutionary program you end up adapting to the existing consciousness and watering down their politics.

Some years ago the American International Socialist Organization (ISO) supported the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) as they campaigned for state intervention to “clean up” the union. Now that the courts have thrown out the TDU-backed teamster president Ron Carey, the ISO is singing a different tune:

“Government intervention was widely viewed as a step forward, especially since the government set up the first direct elections for Teamster presidency—which elected Ron Carey in 1991.

“But it only was a matter of time before the government, having established its right to intervene in the unions, would go against the interests of the rank and file.”

—Sharon Smith in *Socialist Review*, No. 215, January 1998, “A crime to organise?”

Marxism is useless if you don’t argue it with people. What’s the good of opposing state intervention after the

fact? The ISO didn’t have the guts to raise the Marxist slogan of class independence when it really mattered. The new position is nothing but commentary. The ISO’s failure to raise a Marxist program when it really mattered is evidence that they don’t believe that the working class can be won to revolution through the intervention of a vanguard party. So they water things down.

Democratic Centralism or Bureaucratic Centralism?

Some ISers who agree with some of these points may think, “well, we made some mistakes, nobody’s perfect, but we are a democratic group and our mistakes are correctable.” But these “mistakes” form a pattern—one which can only be broken by going to the roots of the whole IS tradition. And the IS leadership is very resistant to any kind of fundamental political discussion. IS national meetings don’t usually feature much political discussion. Mostly they repeat old affirmations: “the period is great, we’ve got to recruit.” Any opposition to the leadership is taken care of very quickly, and in a way designed to prevent serious political discussion. In Vancouver, the Steering Committee recently split the branch to isolate a democratically elected branch leadership. In my own case, it took only slightly more than a month to expel me after it became known that I was developing differences.

The lack of democracy is particularly clear in the way the international group runs. The IS internationally is a *bureaucratic centralist* organization. Individual members at the national level have no say in determining the international line of the group. The Central Committee (CC) of the British

SWP simply gives orders to the other national leaderships. When the SWP leaders decided in the early 1990s that it was time for a “turn,” the membership had no say in this. Periodic delegated international conventions and an elected international leadership (as in the Fourth International under Trotsky) could provide the possibility of democratically evaluating and correcting the line of the group. But at the same time it would also pose the “risk” that members might not agree with everything laid down by the British CC. Trotsky stood for a democratic-centralist international:

“We stand not for democracy in general, but for *centralist* democracy. It is precisely for this reason that we place national leadership above local leadership and international leadership above national leadership.”

—“An Open Letter to All Members of the Leninbund,”
6 February 1930

The means used to short-circuit serious political debate internally are also extended [externally], in an attempt to shelter ISers from political discussion with people outside the group as well. Organizations such as the Trotskyist League and the Bolshevik Tendency are excluded from all IS public meetings purely on the basis of their politics—to avoid any uncomfortable questions they might raise. I admit that I once agreed with, and participated in, the IS exclusion policy. I regret this and now reject this policy 100 percent. I also regret and repudiate anything I may have said in ignorance about these groups in the past.

The IS policy is not even limited to the groups standing furthest to its left. At Marxism '97, IS members were instructed not to talk to or even take leaflets from members of other groups, “hear no evil—read no evil!” In an internal memo written after the Montreal anti-poverty conference in January 1996, where Labour Militant and other groups turned up, the IS leadership admitted that, “no matter how bonkers the politics of some of these sects, they can grow just like us.” But the conclusion was that it is a “terrible mistake” to even talk to any of them:

“Talking to members of one of these groups is not the same as talking to a contact. They are poison, and we have to turn our back hard on them. It is a distraction for us to be spending time analyzing their politics, discussing their paper, etc. It sucks us into the ‘otherworldly’ milieu of the small sects. They are irrelevant.”

For similar reasons the IS generally avoids, or at least tries to minimize, situations where its members end up working closely with members of other groups even when they share a common objective (like to defend Mumia Abu Jamal). If the politics of all the other groups were indeed so irrelevant to the issues facing the working class, there would not be much need for discussion. But the fact is that they often discuss the same issues that the IS does, even if they sometimes draw different conclusions or propose different tactics. Whether they are right or wrong on a particular question, a policy of simply refusing to read, discuss or debate with them is not aimed at helping develop a rounded Marxist consciousness—it can only tend to prevent IS members from seriously thinking about politics.

The IS leadership’s policy of refusing to discuss or debate other elements of the left is exactly the opposite to that of Lenin and Trotsky. IS members should ask themselves why the writings of all the great revolutionaries (e.g. Marx, Lenin and Trotsky) are *full* of polemics and political criticisms of other leftists. They wrote lots of articles directed at shades of leftist opinion that were much smaller and more “irrelevant” in relative terms, than the other Canadian left

groups. They were not afraid of politically engaging their political rivals, and they knew that the best way to educate their members and supporters was by drawing what Lenin called “lines of demarcation” through polemics.

Marxism is a science. A science can only develop if all shades of opinion are able to be heard. I believe that the revolutionary left would be in much better shape if differences were debated thoroughly and openly. Real revolutionaries practice workers’ democracy—they don’t just advocate it in the abstract. Political exclusions and attempts to prevent your members from reading or discussing other points of view on the left only make sense if you have something to hide. These techniques are designed to help the IS “Go for Growth,” but in the end they can only end up depoliticizing the IS.

Revolutionary Continuity

It is very important to know the history of the Marxist movement and particularly of your own organization. An organization’s history tells you a great deal about why it is where it is today and where it is likely to go. In the IS little attention is paid to the group’s history. Most members pick up this information informally in bits and pieces. Many people know that in Canada the IS originated in the 1970s as a group within the Waffle—a left-nationalist faction of the NDP.

For those who don’t know, Tony Cliff, founder of the IS tendency internationally, was expelled from the Fourth International for refusing to support North Korea against American imperialism and its South Korean puppet in the Korean War. Cliff said that North Korea, like the USSR, was “state capitalist.” In fact it was not capitalist—which is why the U.S. was so hostile to it. North Korea was modeled on the Soviet Union under Stalin—the old landed ruling class and their imperialist patrons’ property had been expropriated, the economy was collectivized and the dictatorial Kim Il Sung regime monopolized all political power.

One thing that Tony Cliff and the IS leadership have never been able to explain is why, if it was incorrect to call for a victory of the North Korean Stalinists against the U.S. and its South Korean puppets in the 1950s, was it okay to support the North Vietnamese Stalinists against the U.S. and its South Vietnamese puppets 15 years later? The forces involved in the two conflicts were virtually identical. The only thing that was different—and for the IS this is decisive—was the *degree of popularity*. In the early 1950s the Cold War was at its height and there was a massive wave of anti-communist hysteria. Tony Cliff’s declaration that Russia and its allies were “capitalist” meant that he no longer had to defend it or the other deformed workers’ states (including North Korea and China) against imperialism. This was clearly a direct result of the enormous ideological pressures of McCarthyism bearing down on the left. But by the late 1960s, with the New Left, the Vietnamese were popular with the radicalizing students the IS sought to recruit. So Cliff switched the IS line to defending the (popular) Stalinists against imperialism. Trotsky said that opportunists always know which way the wind is blowing.

Conclusion

I would like to make it clear that I have no personal animosity toward comrades in the IS. I know there are plenty of dedicated people in the group who really want to be communists and to fight to change the world. Unfortu-



BLACK STAR

Vietnam War protest: Washington, 1967. Mass anti-war movement led IS to support 'state-capitalist' North Vietnam

nately, they are in the wrong organization.

The IS's flawed analysis of the period and faulty understanding of the party question is connected to its history of political adaptation to prevailing winds. The fact that the analysis of the period and so much more originates largely by bureaucratic decree from the SWP CC adds to the difficulty of attempting any serious change in the group's direction. The leadership is constantly saying, "we're on the verge of something big—look at the American, British and Greek groups—just push a little harder." This keeps members running, but they aren't really going in any direction. They are like chickens with their heads cut off—running around a lot, but not really getting anywhere.

When the big break doesn't come, people get demoralized. I've seen some good people move away from revolutionary politics after a period of frantic activity. When this happens the IS rarely makes much effort to keep them and instead tends to say "they were no good, let's recruit some new people." The raw, relatively politically inexperienced people, who are constantly being recruited to regenerate the group, have the advantage of making it very easy for the regime to get what it wants internally. In the last few months, I have done some reading about other groups which took a similar approach in the past. Some of them grew to thousands of people, but ultimately fell apart because what holds a group together is the set of ideas, the program, shared by the members. Groups like the IS, which place a higher value on short-run success than winning influence for their ideas, end up spitting out a lot of good people, many of whom drift away from the left.

The only way to build a serious group is on the basis of a serious, consistently revolutionary program and consistently politically principled activity. Some may say that the

IS is the biggest group in Canada, and that their "sectarian" opponents are too small to influence things. Being small is no virtue, but it is better to have a revolutionary group of whatever size than a bigger revisionist one. Because a small revolutionary group has the possibility of one day leading to victory, whereas an opportunist one (like the IS) never can, no matter how big it gets. There are a lot of individuals in the IS who can have a large impact on the direction of the revolutionary left in this country. But the road to revolution is a precipitous path and there are no shortcuts. It is sometimes difficult, but it is always necessary, to tell the working class the truth. A revolutionary group must have the courage to openly side with Iraq against Canadian imperialism in a military conflict in the Persian Gulf or to vote for leftist opponents of the capitalist ANC in South Africa.

I declare for the International Bolshevik Tendency. After considerable study I have come to the conclusion that the IBT represents real revolutionary continuity—from the formerly revolutionary Spartacist League, through the Revolutionary Tendency, the American Socialist Workers Party, Trotsky's Fourth International and back to the Bolshevik Party that led the Russian proletariat to power. The IBT is the living embodiment of the program of Lenin and Trotsky—the program of Bolshevism.

The only possibility for the future of humanity on this planet is communism. This can only come about through a proletarian revolution led by a vanguard party. I look forward to future discussions with IS members about how such a party can be created.

Reforge the Fourth International—World Party of Socialist Revolution!

Yours for workers' democracy
Stephen J.