

# BT/LTT Fusion Document For Trotskyism!

*The following document was adopted by the fusion conference of the Bolshevik Tendency and the Left Trotskyist Tendency as a codification of the programmatic agreement reached by the two organizations.*

## 1. Party and Program

“The interests of the [working] class cannot be formulated otherwise than in the shape of a program; the program cannot be defended otherwise than by creating the party. “The class, taken by itself, is only material for exploitation. The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when from a social class *in itself* it becomes a political class *for itself*. This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious.”

—L.D. Trotsky, “What Next?” 1932

The working class is the only thoroughly revolutionary class in modern society, the only class with the capacity to end the insanity of capitalist rule internationally. The fundamental task of the communist vanguard is to instill in the class (particularly its most important component, the industrial proletariat) the consciousness of its historic role. We explicitly reject all stratagems put forward by centrists and reformists, lifestyleists and sectoralists which see in one or another non-proletarian section of the population a more likely vehicle for social progress.

The liberation of the proletariat, and with that the elimination of the material basis of all forms of social oppression, hinges on the question of leadership. The panoply of potential “socialist” leaderships are in the final analysis reducible to two programs: reform or revolution. While purporting to offer a “practical” strategy for the gradual amelioration of the inequities of class society, reformism acts to reconcile the working class to the requirements of capital. Revolutionary Marxism, by contrast, is based on the fundamental antagonism between capital and labor and the consequent necessity for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat as the precondition for any significant social progress.

The hegemony of bourgeois ideology in its various forms within the proletariat represents the most powerful bulwark to capitalist rule. As James P. Cannon, the historic leader of American Trotskyism, noted in *The First Ten Years of American Communism*:

“The strength of capitalism is not in itself and its own institutions; it survives only because it has bases of support in the organizations of the workers. As we see it now, in the light of what we have learned from the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, nine-tenths of the struggle for socialism is the struggle against bourgeois influence in the workers’ organizations, including the party.”

The key distinction between a revolutionary organization and a centrist or reformist one is found not so much in abstract statements of ultimate goals and objec-

tives, but in the positions which each advances in the concrete situations posed by the class struggle. Reformists and centrists tailor their programmatic response to each new event in accordance with the illusions and preconceptions of their audience. But the role of a revolutionary is to tell the workers and the oppressed what they do not already know.

“The program must express the objective tasks of the working class rather than the backwardness of the workers. It must reflect society as it is and not the backwardness of the working class. It is an instrument to overcome and vanquish the backwardness.... We cannot postpone, modify objective conditions which don’t depend upon us. We cannot guarantee that the masses will solve the crisis, but we must express the situation as it is, and that is the task of the program.”

—Trotsky, “The Political Backwardness of the American Workers,” 1938

We seek to root the communist program in the working class through building programmatic-based caucuses in the trade unions. Such formations must actively participate in all struggles for partial reform and improvements in the situation of the workers. They must also be the best upholders of the militant traditions of class solidarity, e.g., the proposition that “Picket Lines Mean Don’t Cross!” At the same time they must seek to recruit the most politically conscious workers to a world view that transcends parochial shopfloor militancy, and addresses the burning political questions of the day in a fashion which points to the necessity of eliminating the anarchy of production for profit and replacing it with rational, planned production for human need.

Our intervention in the mass organizations of the proletariat is based on the Transitional Program adopted by the founding convention of the Fourth International in 1938. In a certain sense there can be no such thing as a “finished program” for Marxists. It is necessary to take account of historical developments in the past five decades and the need to address problems posed by specific struggles of sectors of the class and/or the oppressed which are not dealt with in the 1938 draft. Nonetheless, in its essentials, the program upon which the Fourth International was founded retains all its relevance because it poses socialist solutions to the objective problems facing the working class today in the context of the unchanging necessity of proletarian power.

## 2. Permanent Revolution

Over the past five hundred years, capitalism has created a single world economic order with an international division of labor. We live in the epoch of imperialism—the epoch of capitalist decline. Experience this century has demonstrated that the national bourgeoisies of the neo-colonial world are incapable of completing the historic tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. There is, in general, no path of independent capitalist

development open for these countries.

In the neo-colonial countries the accomplishments of the classical bourgeois revolutions can only be replicated by smashing capitalist property relations, severing the tentacles of the imperialist world market and establishing working class (i.e., collectivized) property. Only a socialist revolution—a revolution carried out *against* the national bourgeoisie and big landowners—can lead to a qualitative expansion of the productive forces.

We reject the Stalinist/Menshevik “two-stage” strategy of proletarian subordination to the supposed “progressive” sectors of the bourgeoisie. We stand for the complete and unconditional political independence of the proletariat in every country. Without exception, the national bourgeoisies of the “Third World” act as the agents of imperialist domination whose interests are, in a historic sense, far more closely bound up with the bankers and industrialists of the metropolis than with their own exploited peoples.

Trotskyists offer military, but not political, support to petty-bourgeois nationalist movements (or even bourgeois regimes) which enter into conflict with imperialism in defense of national sovereignty. In 1935, for example, the Trotskyists stood for military victory of the Ethiopians over the Italian invaders. However, Leninists cannot automatically determine their position on a war between two bourgeois regimes from their relative level of development (or underdevelopment). In the squalid 1982 Malvinas/Falklands war, where the defense of Argentine sovereignty was never at issue, Leninists called for both British and Argentine workers to “turn the guns around”—for revolutionary defeatism on both sides.

### 3. Guerrillatism

Our strategy for revolution is mass proletarian insurrection. We reject guerrillatism as a strategic orientation (while recognizing that it can sometimes have supplementary tactical value) because it relegates the organized, politically conscious working class to the role of passive onlooker. A peasant-based guerrilla movement, led by radical petty-bourgeois intellectuals, cannot establish working-class political power *regardless* of the subjective intent of its leadership.

On several occasions since the end of the Second World War it has been demonstrated that, given favorable objective circumstances, such movements can successfully uproot capitalist property. Yet because they are not based on the mobilization of the organized working class, the best outcome of such struggles is the establishment of nationalist, bureaucratic regimes qualitatively identical to the product of the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian Revolution (i.e., Yugoslavia, Albania, China, Vietnam and Cuba). Such “deformed worker states” require supplementary proletarian political revolutions to open the road to socialist development.

### 4. Special Oppression: The Black Question, The Woman Question

The working class today is deeply fractured along racial, sexual, national and other lines. Yet racism, national chauvinism and sexism are not genetically but

rather socially programmed forms of behavior. Regardless of their present level of consciousness, the workers of the world have one crucial thing in common: they cannot fundamentally improve their situation, as a class, without destroying the social basis of all oppression and exploitation once and for all. This is the material basis for the Marxist assertion that the proletariat has as its historic mission the elimination of class society and with that the eradication of all forms of extra-class or “special” oppression.

In the United States, the struggle for workers power is inextricably linked to the struggle for black liberation. The racial division between black and white workers has historically been the *primary* obstacle to class consciousness. American blacks are not a nation but a race-color caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of society and concentrated overwhelmingly in the working class, particularly in strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat. Brutalized, abused and systematically discriminated against in the “land of the free,” the black population has historically been relatively immune to the racist imperial patriotism which has poisoned much of the white proletariat. Black workers have generally proved the most militant and combative section of the class. The fight for black liberation—against the everyday racist brutality of life in capitalist America—is central to the construction of a revolutionary vanguard on the North American continent. The struggle against the special oppression of the other national, linguistic and racial minorities, particularly the growing Latino population, is a question which will also be key to the American revolution.

The oppression of women is materially rooted in the existence of the nuclear family: the basic and indispensable unit of bourgeois social organization. The fight for complete social equality for women is of strategic importance in every country on the globe. A closely related form of special oppression is that experienced by homosexuals who are persecuted for failing to conform to the sexual roles dictated by the “normalcy” of the nuclear family. The gay question is not strategic like the woman question, but the communist vanguard must champion the democratic rights of homosexuals and oppose any and all discriminatory measures directed at them.

In the unions communists campaign for equal access to all jobs; union-sponsored programs to recruit and upgrade women and minorities in “non-traditional” fields; equal pay for equivalent work and jobs for all. At the same time we defend the seniority system as a historic acquisition of the trade-union movement and oppose such divisive and anti-union schemes as preferential layoffs. It is the historic responsibility of the communist vanguard to struggle to unite the working class for its common class interests across the artificial divisions promoted in capitalist society. To do this means to advance the interests of the most exploited and oppressed and to struggle relentlessly against every manifestation of discrimination and injustice.

The oppressed sectors of the population cannot liberate themselves *independently* of proletarian revolution, i.e., within the framework of the social system which originated and perpetuates their oppression. As Lenin noted in *State and Revolution*:

“Only the proletariat—by virtue of the economic role it plays in large-scale production—is capable of being the leader of *all* the toiling and exploited masses, whom the bourgeoisie exploits, oppresses and crushes often not less, but more, than it does the proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an *independent* struggle for their emancipation.”

We live in a class society and the program of every social movement must, in the final analysis, represent the interests of one of the two classes with the potential to rule society: the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. In the trade unions, bourgeois ideology takes the form of narrow economism; in the movements of the oppressed it manifests itself as sectoralism. What black nationalism, feminism and other forms of sectoralist ideology have in common is that they all locate the root of oppression in something other than the system of capitalist private property.

The strategic orientation of the Marxist vanguard toward “independent” (i.e., multi-class) sectoralist organizations of the oppressed must be to assist in their internal differentiation into their class components. This implies a struggle to win as many individuals as possible to the perspective of proletarian revolution and the consequent necessity of an integrated vanguard party.

## 5. The National Question and ‘Interpenetrated Peoples’

“Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the ‘most just’, ‘purest’, most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism....”

—V.I. Lenin, “Critical Remarks on the National Question”

Marxism and nationalism are two fundamentally counterposed world views. We uphold the principle of the equality of nations, and oppose any privileges for any nation. At the same time Marxists reject *all* forms of nationalist ideology and, in Lenin’s words, welcome “every kind of assimilation of nations, except that founded on force and privilege.” The Leninist program on the national question is primarily a negative one designed to take the national question off the agenda and undercut the appeal of petty-bourgeois nationalists, in order to more starkly pose the class question.

In “classic” cases of national oppression (e.g., Quebec), we champion the right of self-determination, without necessarily advocating its exercise. In the more complex cases of two peoples interspersed, or “interpenetrated,” throughout a single geographical territory (Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Palestine/Israel), the abstract right of each to self-determination cannot be realized equitably within the framework of capitalist property relations. Yet in none of these cases can the oppressor people be equated with the whites in South Africa or the French colons in Algeria; i.e., a privileged settler-caste/labor aristocracy dependent on the super-exploitation of indigenous labor to maintain a standard of living qualitatively higher than the oppressed population.

Both the Irish Protestants and the Hebrew-speaking population of Israel are class-differentiated peoples.

Each has a bourgeoisie, a petty bourgeoisie and a working class. Unlike guilty middle-class moralists, Leninists do not simply endorse the nationalism of the oppressed (or the petty-bourgeois political formations which espouse it). To do so simultaneously forecloses the possibility of exploiting the real class contradictions in the ranks of the oppressor people and cements the hold of the nationalists over the oppressed. The proletarians of the ascendant people can never be won to a nationalist perspective of simply inverting the current unequal relationship. A significant section of them *can* be won to an anti-sectarian class-against-class perspective because it is in their objective interests.

The logic of capitulation to petty-bourgeois nationalism led much of the left to support the Arab rulers (the embodiment of the so-called “Arab Revolution”) against the Israelis in the Mid-East wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973. In essence these were inter-capitalist wars in which the workers and oppressed of the region had nothing to gain by the victory of either. The Leninist position was therefore one of defeatism on both sides. For both Arab and Hebrew workers the main enemy was at home. The 1956 war was a different matter; in that conflict the working class had a side: with Nasser against the attempts of French and British imperialism (aided by the Israelis) to reappropriate the recently nationalized Suez Canal.

While opposing nationalism as a matter of principle, Leninists are not neutral in conflicts between the oppressed people and the oppressor state apparatus. In Northern Ireland we demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops and we defend the blows struck by the Irish Republican Army at such imperialist targets as the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the British Army or the hotel full of Conservative cabinet ministers at Brighton. Similarly, we militarily side with the Palestinian Liberation Organization against the forces of the Israeli state. In no case do we defend terrorist acts directed at civilian populations. This, despite the fact that the criminal terrorism of the Zionist state against the Palestinians, like that of the British army and their Protestant allies against the Catholics of Northern Ireland, is many times greater than the acts of communal terror by the oppressed.

## 6. Immigration/Emigration

Leninists support the basic democratic right of any individual to emigrate to any country in the world. As in the case of other democratic rights, this is not some sort of categorical imperative. We would not, for example, favor the emigration of any individual who would pose a threat to the military security of the degenerated or deformed worker states. The right of individual immigration, if exercised on a sufficiently wide scale, can come into conflict with the right of self-determination for a small nation. Therefore Trotskyists do not raise the call for “open borders” as a general programmatic demand. In Palestine during the 1930’s and 1940’s, for example, the massive influx of Zionist immigration laid the basis for the forcible expulsion of the Palestinian people from their own land. We do not recognize the “right” of unlimited Han migration to Tibet, nor of

French citizens to move to New Caledonia.

The “open borders” demand is generally advocated by well-meaning liberal/radical muddleheads motivated by a utopian desire to rectify the hideous inequalities produced by the imperialist world order. But world socialist revolution—not mass migration—is the Marxist solution to the misery and destitution of the majority of mankind under capitalism.

In the U.S., we defend Mexican workers apprehended by *La Migra*. We oppose all immigration quotas, all roundups and all deportations of immigrant workers. In the unions we fight for the immediate and unconditional granting of full citizenship rights to all foreign-born workers.

## 7. Democratic Centralism

A revolutionary organization must be strictly centralized with the leading bodies having full authority to direct the work of lower bodies and members. The organization must have a political monopoly over the public political activity of its members. The membership must be guaranteed the right of full factional democracy (i.e., the right to conduct internal political struggle to change the line and/or to replace the existing leadership). Internal democracy is not a decorative frill—nor merely a safety valve for the ranks to blow off steam—it is a critical and indispensable necessity for the revolutionary vanguard if it is to master the complex developments of the class struggle. It is also the chief means by which revolutionary cadres are created. The right to internal factional democracy, i.e., the right to struggle against revisionism within the vanguard, is the only “guarantee” against the political degeneration of a revolutionary organization.

Attempts to gloss over important differences and blur lines of political demarcation internally can only weaken and disorient a revolutionary party. An organization cohered by diplomacy, lowest-common denominator consensus and the concomitant programmatic ambiguity (instead of principled programmatic agreement and the struggle for political clarity) awaits only the first serious test posed by the class struggle to break apart. Conversely, organizations in which the expression of differences is proscribed—whether formally or informally—are destined to ossify into rigid, hierarchical and lifeless sects increasingly divorced from the living workers movement and unable to reproduce the cadres necessary to carry out the tasks of a revolutionary vanguard.

## 8. Popular Fronts

“The question of questions at present is the Popular Front. The left centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical maneuver, so as to be able to peddle their wares in the shadow of the Popular Front. In reality, the Popular Front is the *main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism.”

—Trotsky, “The POUM and the Popular Front,” 1936

Popular frontism (i.e., a programmatic bloc, usually for governmental power, between workers organizations and representatives of the bourgeoisie) is class

treason. Revolutionaries can give no support, however “critical,” to participants in popular fronts.

The tactic of critical electoral support to reformist workers parties is premised on the contradiction inherent in such parties between their bourgeois (reformist) program and their working-class base. When a social-democratic or Stalinist party enters into a coalition or electoral bloc with bourgeois or petty-bourgeois formations, this contradiction is effectively suppressed for the life of the coalition. A member of a reformist workers party who stands for election on the ticket of a class-collaborationist coalition (or popular front) is in fact running as a representative of a *bourgeois* political formation. Thus the possibility of the application of the tactic of critical support is excluded, because the contradiction which it seeks to exploit is suspended. Instead, revolutionists should make a condition of electoral support the breaking of the coalition: “Down With the Capitalist Ministers!”

## 9. United Fronts and “Strategic United Fronts”

The united front is a tactic with which revolutionaries seek to approach reformist or centrist formations to “set the base against the top” in situations where there is an urgent felt need for united action on the part of the ranks. It is possible to enter into united-front agreements with petty-bourgeois or bourgeois formations where there is an episodic agreement on a particular issue and where it is in the interests of the working class to do so (e.g., the Bolsheviks’ united front with Kerensky against Kornilov). The united front is a tactic which is not only designed to accomplish the common objective but also to demonstrate *in practice* the superiority of the revolutionary program and thus gain new influence and adherents for the vanguard organization.

Revolutionists never consign the responsibility of revolutionary leadership to an ongoing alliance (or “strategic united front”) with centrist or reformist forces. Trotskyists never issue common propaganda—joint statements of overall political perspective—with revisionists. Such a practice is both dishonest (as it inevitably involves papering over the political differences separating the organizations) and liquidationist. The “strategic united front” is a favorite gambit of opportunists who, despairing of their own small influence, seek to compensate for it by dissolution into a broader bloc on a lowest common-denominator program. In “Centrism and the Fourth International,” Trotsky explained that a revolutionary organization is distinguished from a centrist one by its “active concern for purity of principles, clarity of position, political consistency and organizational completeness.” It is just this which the strategic united front is designed to obliterate.

## 10. Workers Democracy and the Class Line

Revolutionary Marxists, who are distinguished by the fact that they tell the workers the truth, can only benefit from open political confrontation between the various competing currents in the left. It is otherwise

with the reformists and centrists. The Stalinists, social democrats, trade-union bureaucrats and other working-class misleaders all shrink from revolutionary criticism and seek to pre-empt political discussion and debate with gangsterism and exclusions.

We oppose violence and exclusionism within the left and workers movement while upholding the right of everyone to self-defense. We also oppose the use of “soft-core” violence—i.e., slander—which goes hand-in-hand with (or prepares the way for) physical attacks. Slander and violence within the workers movement are completely alien to the traditions of revolutionary Marxism because they are deliberately designed to *destroy* consciousness, the precondition for the liberation of the proletariat.

## 11. The State and Revolution

The question of the state occupies a central place in revolutionary theory. Marxism teaches that the capitalist state (in the final analysis the “special bodies of armed men” committed to the defense of bourgeois property) cannot be taken over and made to serve the interests of working people. Working-class rule can only be established through the destruction of the existing bourgeois state machinery and its replacement with institutions committed to the defense of proletarian property.

We are adamantly opposed to bringing the bourgeois state, in any guise, into the affairs of the labor movement. Marxists oppose all union “reformers” who seek redress from bureaucratic corruption in the capitalist courts. Labor must clean its own house! We also call for the expulsion of all cops and prison guards from the trade-union movement.

The duty of revolutionists is to teach the working class that the state is not an impartial arbiter between competing social interests but a weapon wielded against them by the capitalists. Accordingly, Marxists oppose reformist/utopian calls for the bourgeois state to “ban” the fascists. Such laws are invariably used much more aggressively against the workers movement and the left than against the fascistic scum who constitute the shock troops of capitalist reaction. The Trotskyist strategy to fight fascism is not to make appeals to the bourgeois state, but to mobilize the power of the working class and the oppressed for direct action to crush fascistic movements in the egg *before* they are able to grow. As Trotsky remarked in the *Transitional Program*, “The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory—and ends in the street.”

Leninists reject all notions that imperialist troops can play a progressive role anywhere: whether “protecting” black schoolchildren in the Southern U.S., “protecting” the Catholic population in Northern Ireland or “keeping the peace” in the Middle East. Neither do we seek to pressure the imperialists to act “morally” by divesting nor by imposing sanctions on South Africa. We argue instead that the “Free World” powers are fundamentally united with the racist apartheid regime in defense of the “right” to superexploit black labor. Our answer is to mobilize the power of international labor in effective

class-struggle solidarity actions with South Africa's black workers.

## 12. The Russian Question

“What is Stalinophobia? Is it hatred of Stalinism; fear of this ‘syphilis of the labor movement’ and irreconcilable refusal to tolerate any manifestation of it in the party? Not at all....

“Is it the opinion that Stalinism is not the leader of the international revolution but its mortal enemy? No, that is not Stalinophobia; that is what Trotsky taught us, what we learned again from our experience with Stalinism, and what we believe in our bones.

“The sentiment of hatred and fear of Stalinism, with its police state and its slave labor camps, its frame-ups and its murders of working class opponents, is healthy, natural, normal, and progressive. This sentiment goes wrong only when it leads to reconciliation with American imperialism, and to the assignment of the fight against Stalinism to that same imperialism. In the language of Trotskyism, that and nothing else is Stalinophobia.”

—James P. Cannon, “Stalinist Conciliationism and Stalinophobia,” 1953

We stand for the unconditional defense of the collectivized economies of the degenerated Soviet worker state and the deformed worker states of Eastern Europe, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, China, North Korea and Cuba against capitalist restoration. Yet we do not lose sight for a moment of the fact that only proletarian political revolutions, which overthrow the treacherous anti-working class bureaucrats who rule these states, can guarantee the gains won to date and open the road to socialism.

The victory of the Stalinist faction in the Soviet Union in the 1920's under the banner of “Socialism in One Country” was crowned with the physical extermination of the leading cadres of Lenin's party a decade later. By counterposing the defense of the Soviet Union to the world revolution, the Stalinist usurpers decisively undermine both. The perspective of proletarian insurrection in order to reestablish the direct political rule of the working class is therefore not counterposed but inextricably linked to the defense of the collectivized economies.

The Russian question has been posed most sharply in recent years over two events: the suppression of Polish Solidarnosc and the intervention of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. We side militarily with the Stalinists against both the capitalist-restorationists of Solidarnosc and the Islamic feudalists fighting to preserve female chattel slavery in Afghanistan. This does not imply that the Stalinist bureaucrats have any progressive historical role to play. On the contrary. Nonetheless, we defend those actions (like the December 1981 suppression of Solidarnosc) which they are forced to take in defense of the working-class property forms.

## 13. For the Rebirth of the Fourth International!

“Trotskyism is not a new movement, a new doctrine, but the restoration, the revival, of genuine Marxism as it was expounded and practised in the Russian revolution and in the early days of the Communist International.”

—James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism*

Trotskyism is the revolutionary Marxism of our time—the political theory derived from the distilled experience of over a century-and-a-half of working-class communism. It was verified in a positive sense in the October Revolution in 1917, the greatest event in modern history, and generally negatively since. After the bureaucratic strangulation of the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern by the Stalinists, the tradition of Leninism—the practice and program of the Russian Revolution—was carried forward by the Left Opposition and by it alone.

The Trotskyist movement was born in a struggle for revolutionary internationalism against the reactionary/utopian conception of “Socialism in One Country.” The necessity of revolutionary organization on an international basis derives from the organization of capitalist production itself. Revolutionists on each national terrain must be guided by a strategy which is international in dimension—and that can only be elaborated by the construction of an international working-class leadership. To the patriotism of the bourgeoisie and its social-democratic and Stalinist lackeys, the Trotskyists counterpose Karl Liebknecht’s immortal slogan: “The Main Enemy is At Home!” We stand on the basic programmatic positions adopted by the 1938 founding conference of the Fourth International, as well as the first four congresses of the Communist International and the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky.

The cadres of the Fourth International outside of North America were largely annihilated or dispersed in the course of the Second World War. The International was definitively politically destroyed by Pabloite revisionism in the early 1950’s. We are not neutral in the 1951-53 split—we side with the International Committee (IC) against the Pabloite International Secretariat (IS). The IC’s fight was profoundly flawed both in terms of political framework and execution. Nonetheless, in the final analysis, the impulse of the IC to resist the dissolution of the Trotskyist cadre into the Stalinist and social-democratic parties (as proposed by Pablo) and its defense of the necessity of the conscious factor in history, made it qualitatively superior to the liquidationist IS.

Within the IC the most important section was the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It had also been the strongest section at the time of the founding of the International. It had benefited by the most direct collaboration with Trotsky and had a leading cadre which went back to the early years of the Comintern. The political collapse of the SWP as a revolutionary organization, signalled by its uncritical enthusing over Castroism in the early 1960’s, and culminating in its defection to the Pabloites in 1963, was therefore an enormous

blow to world Trotskyism.

We solidarize with the struggle of the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP (forerunner of the Spartacist League/US) to defend the revolutionary program against the centrist objectivism of the majority. We stand on the Trotskyist positions defended and elaborated by the revolutionary Spartacist League in the years that followed. However, under the pressure of two decades of isolation and frustration, the SL itself has qualitatively degenerated into a grotesquely bureaucratic and overtly cultist group of political bandits which, despite a residual capacity for cynical “orthodox” literary posturing, has shown a consistent impulse to flinch under pressure. The “international Spartacist tendency” today is in no important sense politically superior to any of the dozen or more fake-Trotskyist “internationalists” which lay claim to the mantle of the Fourth International.

The splintering of several of the historic pretenders to Trotskyist continuity and the difficulties and generally rightward motion of the rest opens a potentially fertile period for political reassessment and realignment among those who do not believe that the road to socialism lies through the British Labour Party, Lech Walesa’s capitalist-restorationist Solidarnosc or the Chilean popular front. We urgently seek to participate in a process of international regroupment of revolutionary cadres on the basis of the program of authentic Trotskyism, as a step toward the long overdue rebirth of the Fourth International, World Party of Socialist Revolution.

“On the basis of a long historical experience, it can be written down as a law that revolutionary cadres, who revolt against their social environment and organize parties to lead a revolution, can—if the revolution is too long delayed—themselves degenerate under the continuing influences and pressures of this same environment...”

“But the same historical experience also shows that there are exceptions to this law too. The exceptions are the Marxists who remain Marxists, the revolutionists who remain faithful to the banner. The basic ideas of Marxism, upon which alone a revolutionary party can be constructed, are continuous in their application and have been for a hundred years. The ideas of Marxism, which create revolutionary parties, are stronger than the parties they create and never fail to survive their downfall. They never fail to find representatives in the old organizations to lead the work of reconstruction.

“These are the continuators of the tradition, the defenders of the orthodox doctrine. The task of the uncorrupted revolutionists, obliged by circumstances to start the work of organizational reconstruction, has never been to proclaim a new revelation—there has been no lack of such Messiahs, and they have all been lost in the shuffle—but to reinstate the old program and bring it up to date.”

—James P. Cannon, *The First Ten Years of American Communism*